

A251

World archaeology

Study Guide



The Open University





Study Guide

Phil Perkins



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Course introduction

Welcome to A251 *World archaeology*. You will have your own reasons for choosing this course. Perhaps you have always been interested in archaeology and wish to learn more. Or you may have seen archaeology on the television and now want to gain some in-depth knowledge. Whatever your reasons for deciding to study archaeology, we hope that this course will widen your horizons and introduce you to new parts of the world and new human cultures.

Learning outcomes

The main aim of the course is – obviously enough – to enable you to learn about the archaeology of the world. Within that, your learning may be divided into several stages: gathering knowledge and understanding; critically analysing what you learn; and synthesising and communicating what you have learned. This may be further broken down into more precise outcomes, in terms of knowledge, skills and communication:

- 1 To achieve a knowledge of and a critical understanding of the human past and the principles, concepts and techniques used in the study of the archaeology of the world.
- 2 To be able to apply knowledge and understanding to a range of questions and problems relating to the understanding of the global human past, through the evaluation and interpretation of archaeological evidence in a variety of situations.
- 3 To be able to compare and use different approaches to issues and problems in world archaeology.
- 4 To develop your skills in finding and critically evaluating information in a range of contexts.
- 5 To develop your skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) tools, as appropriate, to study effectively.
- 6 To practise communicating information, arguments and ideas effectively, using the appropriate style and language.
- 7 To reflect upon and manage your own learning.

The details of what you will learn will vary from block to block. I will make clear the particular aspects of your learning that are being developed at appropriate points in the blocks.

It is worth reminding yourself of these learning objectives once in a while. This will help you make the most of the course, and will stand you in good stead when writing your assignments.

Course structure and content

The course follows a broadly chronological framework, starting with the end of the last Ice Age and ending with contacts between the Western world and indigenous peoples of the Pacific. However, it would be impossible to teach and learn all of the archaeology of the entire world in the time you have to study this course and so some choices have had to be made. The course does cover all of the time span and all areas of the inhabited globe, but it does not trace the whole story in any one place. To enable you to study topics in any depth the course focuses on particular issues and problems, selecting key areas of the world where they may be studied. It also attempts to provide you with the necessary background to help you place local developments in a larger context.

The course structure is as follows:

Block 1 starts with a brief introduction to archaeology and then goes on to investigate the beginnings of agricultural societies. In this block you will study in detail Australia, Southwest Asia, East Asia and Mesoamerica (Central America).

Block 2 deals with the first cities and states, drawing upon cultural development in Southwest Asia, Egypt, Africa, the Mediterranean, South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia, and Mesoamerica.

Block 3 investigates states and the emergence of empires in different parts of the world, including Southwest Asia, China, Korea and Japan, Mesoamerica and South America, and Greece and Rome. At the end of each of these blocks you will have a week to prepare an assignment in which you will have the opportunity to develop your skills and demonstrate your knowledge and understanding.

Block 4 takes a different approach and considers some themes in human cultural development, including art, colonisation of the world and inequality. In these sections some debates in archaeology will be investigated and archaeological interpretations will be questioned.

The end-of-course assessment (ECA) is an extended essay chosen from a number of alternatives. This will give you an opportunity to explore a particular theme in several areas of the world. There is no final written examination in this course, so the ECA is the place for you to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding you have learned during the course.

Unlike most other OU 30-point courses, this course has been designed to run for only 18 weeks. This means that you will be working at a similar pace to students on a 60-point course, but for only half the amount of time. The course has been designed to provide you with about 12 hours of work per week. This figure is based on averages and allows you time for thinking and reflection, and for general activities related to being a student. You may find that you take more or less time than this; this is only to be expected. If you are concerned that you are taking less time, or more time, than this, do not hesitate to discuss it with your tutor, especially if you feel you are falling behind the schedule in the study calendar.

Course materials

Course text

The core of the course is the course text: *The Human Past: World Prehistory and the Development of Human Societies*, edited by Chris Scarre, Thames and Hudson (2009). For brevity, in the course materials I will refer to *The Human Past* as *HP*.

HP is a textbook that draws together the latest archaeological research and interpretations from archaeologists around the world, all of whom are specialists in their own areas. You will not be reading the whole of *HP* during the course, but will be guided through it selectively by this Study Guide. The book is divided into chapters and within these into sections, identified by headings in bold brown print, and sub-sections, identified by headings in bold italic black print. (Note that *HP* uses American spellings of English throughout; you will not be penalised for using these spellings in assessments.)

Study Guide

This Study Guide will direct your learning, frequently pointing you to sections or sub-sections of *HP* to read, and setting you things to think about as you read. The Study Guide will help you to learn about world archaeology, rather than just schedule your reading of *HP*.

Audio CD

An audio CD has been made for the course that contains interviews with Chris Scarre and other specialists, some of whom have contributed to *HP*. You will need access to a CD player (or a computer providing those functions) so that you can listen to the CD during Blocks 1–3.

Course website

The course website gives you access to various kinds of electronic resources, some specific to this course and some more generally available. To use it you will need a computer with internet access. Since you may need to make special arrangements to have access to the internet, we have designed the course in such a way that you will need to use the course website only at specific points; however, you may wish to use it more frequently of your own accord. You will see that the course website has a section for each block, and within these are sections for each week of study. In these weekly sections you will find all the resources and links needed for each study week. On the course website, you will find (among other things) links to:

- electronic versions (in pdf format) of the course materials; these are searchable, which is a useful function if you need to find something but can't remember where you read it

- a timeline tool developed for this course
- a collection of resources provided by the Open University Library, such as online image collections, encyclopaedias and journals
- a student forum
- your tutor group
- other websites relevant to the blocks of the course.

Assessment Booklet

This is where you can find details of all the tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) and the extended essay you are required to complete as an end-of-course assessment (ECA). (More information on assessment is given in the following section.)

Study calendar

This gives you a week-by-week overview of the course, setting out the blocks, CD, ICT resources and assignments that you will be working on. There is an online version on the course website.

Study and tuition

If you have taken other Open University courses, you may be used to the fact that you will do most of your work by yourself. At the centre of the course is the course text, *The Human Past*. However, you won't just be reading the book straight through. The design of the book makes it easy to find your way around and it is worth taking some time to familiarise yourself with the way it is organised. The Preface to *HP* (p.19) explains elements of the chapters in the section 'Special features'. You may want to read this before you start your first week's work. This Study Guide will direct you to various sections of the book at different times and set you exercises based on your reading, or it may direct you to parts of the audio CD or the course website.

You will regularly break for various kinds of clearly specified exercises. Sometimes these exercises will ask you to make written notes, but some of them don't specify this. Either way, it is important that you complete these exercises because they are your opportunities for developing your skills, knowledge and understanding. Almost all exercises are followed by a discussion, and I am aware that there is a temptation for you simply to read on, especially if you have little time. However, I urge you not to do that, for at least three reasons. First of all, pure reading, no matter how alert you are, is not the most effective way of learning. You need more active input of your own. Secondly, the discussion rarely contains the 'right answer', and very few of the exercises have just one obvious answer. Most of the focus is on complex or subjective issues, on which there are numerous perspectives. The discussion will give you the perspective of a member of the course team; it won't give you your own. Finally, the discussion will often not make much sense to you if you have not completed the associated reading in the exercise.

Your reading and note taking will be the core of your study. If you feel you might need help with these fundamental study skills, you can find it online at the 'Skills for OU study' website (a link is on the course website), or ask your tutor for advice.

As an OU student, you won't be alone. You will be allocated a tutor who will get in touch with you soon (if they have not done so already). Your tutor will lead the online tutorials to which you will be invited, give you feedback on your assignments and help you prepare for the ECA. He or she will also be available to help you (by phone or email, as well as in the online tutorials) with any queries you may have about the academic content of the course and your own progress and achievement. Your interactions with your tutor throughout the course are an integral part of your work. The learning materials, even though for the most part self-explanatory, have been put together with a view to the fact that you will not just study by yourself, but also through contact with your tutor. Your tutor will be organising online tutorials for you to participate in. These will offer you the facility to learn through discussing course themes with your tutor and with a group of other students. Your tutor will initiate the discussions, but online tutor groups work best when as many students as possible contribute. When you participate you will also be able to ask questions of your tutor and your fellow students. In addition, students often form self-help groups and there is an online forum concerning the course, hosted by OUSA, for informal discussion between students.

The scheduling of tutorials is arranged by your tutor. Other administrative matters are arranged by your local regional office. Each region has its own student support staff who are there to help you. You can also find information online – the A251 course website or your OU home page are the best places to start looking.

Assessment

There are two types of assessment on this course:

- three TMAs, in Weeks 4, 8 and 12
- an ECA, in Weeks 16–18.

TMAs

The TMAs have the following weightings (as a percentage of the overall TMA score):

TMA 01 33.33%

TMA 02 33.33%

TMA 03 33.34%

All TMAs are set out in the A251 Assessment Booklet, where you will also find cut-off dates and further details. You may want to look at it sooner rather than later to help you plan for your assignments. Because there are only

three TMAs, there is no possibility of substitution. The study calendar allows for one week of study time for you to prepare each TMA. If you are afraid you may run out of time before a TMA deadline, do not hesitate to contact your tutor before the deadline to discuss what to do. Even if you know that your TMA is not as perfectly finished as it might be, it is always best to submit something rather than nothing. The TMAs are your continuous assessment elements. The TMAs will contribute 50 per cent to your overall course result. To pass the course you will need to achieve a mark of 40 in your overall TMA score.

ECA

The ECA takes the place of an examination and will consist of an essay written from a choice of two topics. The 2,500-word essay will require you to write on a topic using evidence from more than one region of the globe, and more than one past culture. You will be expected to gather, assess and synthesise evidence from the internet as well as from the course materials. The ECA is your examinable component and you will need to achieve a mark of 40 in your ECA score to pass the course. The examinable component will contribute 50 per cent to your overall course result.

Block 1 Introduction to archaeology and the beginnings of agriculture

Week 1 Introduction to archaeology

In Week 1 you will be using *The Human Past* (HP), the audio CD and, optionally, the internet.

What is archaeology?

The word 'archaeology' derives from two ancient Greek words: *archaios*, meaning 'ancient', and *logos*, meaning 'discussion'. So the word itself means 'discussion of ancient things'. That may be the origin of the word, but what is actually meant by 'archaeology'? To start off Block 1 I am going to ask you to collect your thoughts on what you think the subject of archaeology is all about.

Exercise

What do you think archaeology is? Briefly note down a few points that you think sum up what archaeology is about.

Discussion

Summing up what you think archaeology is, is not as easy to do as it might at first seem. I am guessing that some of the characteristics you will have noted down are that it is about digging things up, studying ancient objects and studying people in the past. I am sure you have noted more ideas, but have you considered what makes archaeology different from, for example, history?

Exercise

Now, for another point of view, read the first two sections of Chapter 1 of *HP*: 'What is archaeology?' and 'The relevance of world archaeology' (pp.25–8). When you have finished reading, look back at the notes you made in the previous exercise. Are there any essential characteristics of archaeology that you would now add to them? Do your notes contain anything that is not discussed in these sections?

Discussion

One aspect of archaeology you may have noted down that is not discussed in these sections is excavation – digging things up. Digging things up is indeed a part of archaeological fieldwork, but it is only one of many practical methods that archaeology uses to understand the past through its material remains. Although *HP* does note that archaeology is 'based on the study of material

culture' (p.27), it does not discuss what material culture is, or the methodology of either how to study it or how to interpret it in cultural or social terms. Material culture is archaeological jargon for the material objects used, for all sorts of purposes, by humans. These may be tools, utensils, containers, buildings, ornaments, clothes, artwork and so on; in short, any physical object that humans use for any purpose. Archaeologists have developed many techniques for studying such artefacts, and their uses of significance. The further reading at the end of the block provides some suggestions if you would like to read more about these aspects of archaeology. Knowledge of the archaeological cultures and societies you will study in this course derives from the results of what has been discovered by practical archaeology. The course focuses on the interpretation and understanding of past societies that can be derived from archaeological fieldwork or laboratory work rather than on the practical aspects of archaeology. This course will not teach you explicitly about archaeological method and theory, but it will teach you about what we can know of past human societies as a result of the application of archaeological methods and theories.

Exercise

Now listen to Track 1 of the audio CD. The track investigates what archaeology is by inviting the contributors, many of whom also contributed chapters to *HP*, to talk about what they have discovered in their own archaeological fieldwork, and also includes contributions from Chris Scarre, the editor of *HP*. As you listen, note down the range of different types of evidence that are considered. When you have completed your listening, go back to your notes on what archaeology is and add to it any important new points.

Discussion

This consideration of what archaeology is, and does, has focused upon the material remains – the things that archaeologists find. It has also considered some of the ways in which these finds may be interpreted as we try to understand the human past. In addition to considering the material remains, the track has also discussed some aspects of the relationship between archaeology and history, and the central role of understanding change in archaeology. Later in the course you will be meeting the contributors again as they discuss their findings in relation to the themes and topics of the course. You can find details about the contributors on the course website.

Regardless of where any boundaries may be drawn to define archaeology, it will always be an endeavour that has a place in the intellectual history of the Western world. An awareness of the broader intellectual context of the study of archaeology will help you to locate archaeology with reference to other branches of the humanities and sciences.

Exercise

Now read the next four sections of Chapter 1 of *HP*: 'The origins of archaeology', 'Social evolution', 'Developments in methodology and

techniques' and 'Archaeology and human evolution' (pp.28–36). When you have finished reading, look back at the notes you made at the start of this section. Would you now change the notes you made on what archaeology is?

Discussion

Archaeology occupies a distinctive position as a subject because it is essentially interdisciplinary. It draws upon humanities, arts, social science, science and, indeed, any other subject that might be relevant in order to investigate the human past through its material remains. If we accept that archaeology can employ a wide range of methodologies and techniques, it still remains to be seen how archaeology pulls together these diverse sources of information and evidence to form an understanding of the past.

Exercise

Now read the final three sections of Chapter 1 of *HP*: 'Explaining change: archaeological theories', 'Humans in long-term perspective' and 'Summary and conclusions' (pp.36–43).

Discussion

In these sections the discussion has rather drifted away from the foundations of archaeology in the study of the material remains of the past and focuses instead on the interpretation of those material remains. It should be clear from your reading that understanding the human past is not a straightforward matter and involves a range of competing methods. Furthermore, understanding the past is much too general an aim. *HP* (p.36) points toward a more specific target: understanding change in the human past. One approach to understanding change is first to develop a theory that might explain processes of change and then to examine the archaeological evidence to investigate whether the evidence supports or refutes the theory.

HP first discusses the concept of 'cultural ecology'. Essentially this is a theory that suggests human cultures and societies develop by responding to their environmental circumstances. At a basic level of survival or food procurement strategies, pre-modern societies will have been directly dependent on their environment for obtaining food and shelter. Yet how far does the environment determine the less mundane human responses and cultural development? Surely if the environment were the sole determinant of human responses, human societies in similar environments would be similar to one another. But if this were always the case, how could different cultures develop in uniform environmental conditions, for example the Mediterranean region? A more complex view of cultural ecology would invoke environmental change as a determinant of cultural or social change, with human societies adapting in different ways, more or less successfully, to changing environmental conditions. This theoretical relationship between environmental and social change may be called 'environmental determinism', since it suggests that it is changes in the environmental conditions that provoke human societies to change so as to ensure their survival and prospering in a changed environment. This theory conceives of human individuals and societies as powerless and changing only as a result of external natural forces. This view

of societies was influential through most of the second half of the twentieth century and is therefore more embedded in archaeological thinking and explanation than the new and complementary understanding of change that uses 'agency theory'. Although agency theory is mentioned on pp.36–7 of *HP*, it does not appear to have been overtly used in any of the chapters, largely because of its more recent development. Nevertheless, the testing of new ideas and theories against current interpretations is a feature of academic archaeology. So, without getting bogged down in what agency theory in archaeology is all about (it is still being debated – see the 'Further reading'), it is possible to see how a new theory that considers individuals in the past as able to make decisions about their own behaviour and to change their own societies presents a challenge to deterministic theories such as cultural ecology.

All this raises the question 'Is there a correct understanding of the past?' The 'processual' archaeologist will say 'Yes', but the 'postprocessual' archaeologist will say 'No, there are many possible ways of understanding the past. Some may be better than others, but there is no single objective correct understanding waiting to be found' (*HP*, pp.39–40).

As is so often the case in the study of the humanities, there is no simple single answer to what happened, or how and why it happened, in the human past. Modern archaeology may well be a study of past processes of change, but the current understanding of the archaeological past is also the result of a process. This is the process of academic debate, of weighing up alternative possibilities, of finding new evidence to support or demolish hypotheses, and of building new interpretations and explanations as knowledge and understanding of the archaeological record becomes more detailed and extensive.

So far we have been focusing on 'What is archaeology?', but as an answer to that question is becoming clearer, the next question to consider is 'Why study archaeology?'

The section 'Humans in long-term perspective' identifies three key themes in the study of archaeology:

- humans and the environment
- demographic growth
- symbols and cognition.

These three themes encapsulate three possible answers to that question.

The first theme, the past relationships between humans and the environment, concerns the fundamental context for all of human cultural development. All human activity, past and present, takes place in an environmental setting. But the natural environment is not a neutral unchanging background for human action: it can be modified either deliberately or inadvertently by human activity. If current predictions about global warming and climate change are to be believed, then surely there can be no better time to study how individuals and human societies in the past have adapted to environmental change.

The second theme, demographic growth, is also a contemporary issue. World population is rapidly increasing, even if, in some areas, such as the West, the birth rate is decreasing. The rapid growth in population since the last Ice Age

has been accompanied by immense changes in social and cultural complexity. If the past is any guide, future population growth is likely to be matched by further change in culture and society, and understanding the past will help the contemporary world face a future with more people.

The final theme, symbols and cognition, particularly those aspects concerning how individuals or groups conceive of the world and define their relationships with other groups and individuals, lies behind how societies or ethnic groups define themselves and interact. As a result, understanding the role of symbols and cognition in the past may help to understand their role in the present, particularly in areas of international collaboration or conflict.

Now that you have explored introductory ideas about what archaeology is, it is time to consider the other word in the course title: 'world'. As was made clear in Chapter 1 of *HP*, archaeology can study either an instantaneous past event or a long-term process, just as it can study either an individual person or a whole society. A further dimension is place: archaeology can study either an individual place (a microregion) changing through time or changes in a wide region of the world – it can even compare processes in one region with those in another.

Archaeological time

In the course materials, including the course text, dates are usually referred to as years BC or AD. This is entirely conventional, and has not been adopted to suggest precedence of this dating system over any other. In the areas you will be studying, many different calendars have been, and are, used (for example *HP*, pp.606–7). However, in order to establish a framework for understanding change through time, and to be able to compare one area with another at the same point in time, it is necessary to adopt a single system for referring to time. This enables the construction of chronological diagrams such as that on pp.22–3 of *HP*.

Exercise

Turn to pp.22–3 of *HP*. This ambitious diagram attempts to encapsulate the whole of world archaeology. Take a careful look at how it is organised. Time runs forward from left to right; the top three rows cover 7,000,000 years ago to 10,000 BC and the remaining rows cover 20,000 BC to AD 2000. The latter rows represent regions of the world. When you are familiar with the organisation of the diagram, look at the individual entries. There are two types: dots representing events or short time spans, and lines with arrowheads representing longer periods of time. Look at the rows for Chapter 6 'Early Southwest Asia' and Chapter 12 'Later Southwest Asia'. Categorise each entry in these two rows to create groups of related topics. Start with the categories 'Period' and 'Site' and make a list of the periods and a list of the sites on the timeline. You will probably find that you need to use the index of *HP* and perhaps the contents pages to help you identify some of the entries.

Discussion

Identifying the sites and periods should be relatively straightforward, even if it takes a bit of time to look up each one and find out what it refers to. There are, however, a few points to debate. 'Domesticated rye at Abu Hureyra' (Chapter 6 row) mixes up two things: a site at Abu Hureyra and a particular piece of evidence – the finding of domesticated rye. The site clearly belongs in the 'Sites' list but the find is something different. A new category listing 'Finds' is needed. 'Ebla archive' (Chapter 12 row) also mixes together a site and a find. There is also some ambiguity about the meaning of items such as 'Neo-Assyrian empire' (Chapter 12 row). Is the term 'Neo-Assyrian empire' simply being used as a name for an archaeological period in the same way as 'Ceramic Neolithic' or 'Roman Empire'? If so, it belongs in the 'Period' list. Alternatively, is the Neo-Assyrian empire being identified as a political entity with a delimited start and end date? If this is the case, it belongs in a new, separate category titled something like 'Political and social units'. I think it is probably best to treat the term flexibly and assume that it means both. A similar question could be asked about items such as 'Hittites' (Chapter 12 row), which strictly indicates the time span when the Hittite people may be identified, but also more loosely could be taken to mean the Hittite period.

Exercise

Now consider the items that fitted into neither the 'Site' nor the 'Period' list. Create some new list headings to categorise these other entries on the timeline. 'Finds' is one already discussed, but you will need more. There is a short glossary on pp.721–3 of *HP* (also available online via the course website) that will help with technical terms such as 'sedentism' and 'domestication'.

Discussion

The reason I asked you to undertake this exercise was to get you to investigate the kinds of information that are identified in the diagram as significant in the archaeology of Southwest Asia. The categories I identified were 'Period', 'Site', 'Finds or artefacts', 'People' and 'Processes'. Your categories may be different – perhaps you have more categories, with more detailed definitions. I used 'Processes' to categorise awkward items such as 'Toward sedentary villages'. I also used 'Finds or artefacts' very loosely so that I could include 'First writing' and 'Hammurabi Law Code'; however, the latter also belongs in 'People', so I felt the need to include some items in more than one of the lists. As you built your lists you have been analysing the types of information that the editor of the book thought important enough to be fitted into the diagram summarising the archaeology of the region as it developed through time. Later on in this block you will study the region in detail; you will then be able to form your own ideas about the significance of each of the entries in the table. You may find that you consider other items more significant than the compiler of the timeline did, or you might want to create new categories for items (in addition to 'Period', 'Site', 'Finds or artefacts', etc.). You may find that additional items or categories are more or less useful

to you in structuring your own understanding of the past than those that have been selected by the editor of *HP*.

Obviously, when drawing up the timeline, choices have been made about the sorts of things to include. These choices have been driven not only by a view of what matters more and what less, but also by what can easily be put on a timeline and what cannot. Well-defined periods or significant artefacts are easy enough to add to a timeline, but abstract ideas or long-term, slow-acting change may be more difficult. Such things tend not to be included on the timeline, either because it is too difficult to apply a date to them or the necessary information to define them is simply not available.

Although the archaeological record (that is, the sites and artefacts found – the evidence) should ideally consist of provable information, different people ask different questions, and therefore are interested in constructing timelines using different information. The more you take care to ask your own questions and explore what interests you the most, the more you will get out of this course. The information on the timeline is significant, and by reading through it you have already begun to learn about the archaeology of the world. Be aware, though, that the entries on the timeline do not constitute a definitive list of what happened in the human past. They are the result of a process of collection and selection. You can adapt the timeline, adding your own selections and collecting them together to develop a personalised timeline.

Another thing to remember about timelines is that they tend to privilege events or processes for which we know a date. There are many important things for which we do not know a precise date, and there is a risk that they get forgotten. One remedy is to introduce approximate dates, 'circa' (c.) or 'from ... until ...', but that only goes so far. For everything you read on a timeline, and for everything you learn, it is worth asking yourself what else you are not reading and not learning because they have not been selected. No timeline is ever perfect or complete; it can always be added to, increasing its scope, or refined to improve its accuracy.

You may find that you want to annotate the timeline diagram in *HP*, or the similar diagrams at the start of each chapter, to help you to develop a framework for conceptualising the important developments in a period and place. Alternatively, you may prefer to use the online timeline tool on the course website, which is available for you to use and modify.

The online timeline tool, like all timelines, gives you sets of important events and processes in the periods you study, but this timeline also allows you to add your own information as you work on the various periods. If you do this, by the end of the course you should have your own customised timelines; editing the timeline is also a good way of collecting and selecting information as well as aiding your memory.

If you wish to have a look at the timeline tool, go to the course website, select 'General resources', then 'ICT resources' and then select 'A251 Timeline'. Use the online help available if you need to.

If you have problems with the timeline, your tutor or perhaps a student self-help group should be able to help you.

Geography

The global coverage of this course presents a particular challenge. You may already have a firm grip of the geography of your local region or continent, but inevitably the further the course strays from your home territory, the less sure you may be about the geography of the region you are studying. The course text contains many maps, and each chapter usually begins with some kind of geographical overview. These should form useful reference points for establishing a knowledge of the geography of each area you study. In case you need to deepen your geographical knowledge, the course team has located a number of internet resources that could help you to familiarise yourself with distant areas. These can be found on the course website.

HP contains references to a huge number of archaeological sites, some of which are not marked on the maps. This can be frustrating, but you will not be required to know where all the sites are or to remember their names – this is often difficult since many have been transliterated from foreign languages. However, there will be some names of key sites that you will have to learn and remember – or at least remember how to find them – when it comes to writing your TMAs and ECA.

Archaeology also uses place names in a rather specialised way to identify groups of people and periods of time. For example, excavations in AD 1928 at Wadi en-Natuf, now in Israel, identified a distinctive range of late Palaeolithic artefacts. The place name Natuf was used to identify the people who lived there as Natufians, and the time that the artefacts were made was named the Natufian period. Subsequently, similar artefacts were found at other locations, for example at Abu Hureyra; so the site of Abu Hureyra could also be called Natufian (see *HP*, p.208). This might seem confusing at first, but it is a common feature of Western languages to use place names in this way – think of Rome, Romans and the Roman period for example.

Now that you have investigated both the nature of archaeology and how it can be studied at the scale of the whole world, it is time to begin to explore the first course topic: the origins of agriculture. This topic has been chosen as a starting point because the development of a reliable source of food is essential for the survival and development of every human society, wherever and whenever they lived. The three themes identified in *HP*, humans and the environment, demographic growth, and symbols and cognition, are all clearly intertwined with this topic.

The beginnings of agriculture

For the remainder of this week's work you will be reading the first sections of Chapter 5 of *HP*, written by Chris Scarre. It provides you with an overview of the beginning and development of agriculture around the world. You will read the remainder of Chapter 5 in Block 2.

Exercise

Now read the introduction and the first four sections of Chapter 5 of *HP*: 'Climate change and faunal extinction at the end of the Pleistocene',

'The early Holocene environment', 'The beginnings of agriculture' and 'The spread of agriculture', including material in the 'Key method' and 'Key controversy' boxes (pp.177–90). As you read, keep in the back of your mind the three themes of humans and the environment, demographic growth, and symbols and cognition, and consider how they relate to each of these four sections of *HP*.

Discussion

The emergence of agriculture as a means of subsistence is clearly a complex matter, and one that does not appear to be completely understood and explained at present. There are competing explanations, none of which seems fully to explain the phenomenon. What are the ways in which they compete with each other and why are some inadequate?

Exercise

Look back at the 'Key controversy' box 'Explaining agriculture' (*HP*, pp.188–9). The text discusses five competing theories relating to the origins of agriculture. For each of these five theories, note down which of the three themes of humans and the environment, demographic growth, and symbols and cognition are most relevant.

Discussion

The oasis theory: clearly this revolves mostly around humans and the environment.

The hilly flanks hypothesis: this seems to combine humans and the environment with symbols and cognition (or at least cognition on its own) since human knowledge and skill plays a significant role.

Demographic theories: self-evidently these relate to demographic growth, but the theme of humans and the environment also plays a role since the former is seen as dependent on the latter.

Evolution and intentionality: this is more difficult to classify. The theme of humans and the environment is important, and the role of human cognition is also present, even if the results of human activity were unintentional.

The feasting hypothesis: in this case symbols and cognition seems to be the most relevant theme. Even if they are not made explicit, they form the basis for social competition and emulation.

The final paragraph in the 'Key controversy' box 'Explaining agriculture' (*HP*, pp.188–9) makes it clear that none of these hypotheses provides an adequate explanation for the global emergence of agriculture after the Ice Age. However, the various theories each illustrate different attitudes towards the development of human cultures. All but the last, the feasting hypothesis, to a varying degree envision the process as one in which humans and human societies are more or less passive 'victims' of bigger forces and processes, driven by factors such as environmental change or variable habitats, that are largely beyond human control. Therefore they are largely deterministic.

Alternatively, the theories of demographic growth and feasting seem, to some extent, to empower human societies to respond to their situation and adopt new strategies – in this case agriculture – that actively adapt to their (environmental) circumstances. These differing attitudes reflect the fundamentally interdisciplinary nature of archaeology: one approaches the problem from a scientific perspective and the other approaches it from a humanistic point of view. Both approaches are valid, and neither can claim priority.

This fundamental observation on the nature of archaeology is an appropriate point to pause. In your next week of study you will further pursue the question of the emergence of agriculture, in both general and specific terms.

Week 2 Before farming and the origins of agriculture in Southwest Asia

In Week 2 you will be using *The Human Past* (HP), the audio CD and the internet.

So far in this block you have studied the origins of agriculture at a rather general level, concentrating on processes and theoretical and interpretative issues. Now it is time to examine in more detail some of the categorisations of societies that you have already encountered, first looking at hunter-gatherers in Australia. This will be followed by a detailed study of one of the areas, Southwest Asia, where hunter-gatherer societies first made the transition to agriculture. To conclude the week there is an opportunity to develop your information-gathering skills with exercises on the evaluation of websites and an investigation of the site of Çatalhöyük.

Hunter-gatherers in Australia

In your reading of Chapter 5 of *HP*, you will have seen that the subsection ‘Why agriculture?’ rejects the out-of-date conception that hunter-gatherers lived a life of ‘drudgery and starvation’ and that ‘starvation stalks the stalker’ (*HP*, p.186). This view may well have developed because recent hunter-gatherer societies that could be directly observed by anthropologists all lived in environments perceived as inhospitable from a Western perspective, such as the Arctic or the Kalahari desert. Such environments are typically considered dangerous to human life and lacking in food supplies. The survival of hunter-gatherers in these areas demonstrates that this is not the case, even if their lifeways appear precarious from a Western perspective (‘lifeway’ is archaeological jargon for ‘way of life’, particularly in the USA: see the course website for more details).

As you have read in *HP* (p.32), this approach to understanding hunter-gatherers, judging them as primitive, led in the nineteenth century to the classification of such societies as living in ‘savagery’. To use the terms ‘primitive’ or ‘savage’ in this context is nowadays considered inappropriate: anthropological work has clearly demonstrated that hunter-gatherers live in

culturally rich societies, and that, at least before European contact, their way of life was sustainable. The temptation is to view such societies somehow as fossils, representing survivals from a prehistoric past. The association between modern hunter-gatherers and prehistoric pre-agricultural societies appears to be easy to make – both used flaked stone technology, both were mobile, both were small-scale societies and both lacked ‘civilisation’ (we will return to what ‘civilisation’ means in Block 3). However, as you are about to find out, modern hunter-gatherers are by no means simply prehistoric survivals and have themselves been subject to changing environmental conditions and processes of cultural development, just like any other society.

Exercise

Now read only the first paragraph of the introduction to Chapter 8 of *HP* ('We begin this chapter with ...', p.265) and then read the first section of the chapter: 'Australia', including material in boxes (pp.265–75). You will read the remainder of the chapter in Block 4. As you read, briefly note down the changes in Australia that you consider to have been significant over the past 10,000 years.

Discussion

The chapter makes it clear that the changing environment and sea levels were fundamental in causing change in human subsistence, technology and culture, even if there is still some debate over the details. There still seem to be quite a number of unresolved issues to be settled: some are very detailed (for example, the question of Tasmanians giving up fish), others are more general and important (such as the changes in the relationships between social groups and territory). The discussion of population growth and increasing sedentism does not really investigate the reasons for these changes. The narrative rather suggests that factors similar to those that led to the adoption of agriculture in other regions of the world were coming into play in pre-colonial Australia. Perhaps the most significant and disruptive changes have been the results of contact with Europe. This introduced disease that became a factor in social and political change, and new technologies led to economic changes. The final point made is that, because of these changes, aboriginal Australian hunter-gatherer societies probably do not constitute a reliable basis for making ethnographic analogies to interpret prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies.

Although it has been suggested that the study of historically documented Australian foragers may not provide good analogies for other hunter-gatherer societies and that they should not be considered as cultural or social fossils, their study does serve as a reminder that such societies have more than just a material dimension that can survive as archaeology. In the next section you will go back in time from the study of foragers in the recent past to the study of Southwest Asia in about 18,000 BC, when foraging societies first began to harvest and store plants and settle in villages.

From foragers to complex societies in Southwest Asia

In this section you will study a key episode in the human past: the first time and place that the domestication of plants and animals came together with permanent settlements to create the first agricultural system. In your reading of Chapter 5 of *HP*, you studied the origin of agriculture in general and theoretical terms. Now you will study it in detail, investigating the evidence from Southwest Asia.

Exercise

To begin your study first familiarise yourself with the general framework of chronology, periods, sites and innovations. Analyse the timeline on p.202 of *HP* by first noting the timescale represented and then identifying what type of information is represented in each row of the diagram.

Discussion

The vertical white lines represent periods of 1,000 years each between 20,000 and 6000 BC. The whole diagram therefore represents a long period of 14,000 years. Below the scale of years the principal archaeological periods relevant to the time and region are marked (Epipalaeolithic etc.). Below these are indications of the different climatic periods (for more about these, see Figure 5.1 on p.178). The blue rows below indicate different parts of the region. If you are hazy about this basic geography, now would be a good time to revise it before you read the chapter (see the course website for maps). Within each region the occupation periods of individual sites are marked. At the bottom of the diagram events and innovations are identified and their chronological positions are indicated. This, then, is the background against which the first agricultural systems developed.

Exercise

Now read all of Chapter 6 of *HP* (pp.201–33). As you read, take notes on the significant stages in the development of agriculture in this region, and their approximate chronology, using the online Early Southwest Asia timeline if you wish. You will find these notes useful in the preparation of TMA 01.

Discussion

The greater detail in Chapter 6 fills out the general account that you read in Chapter 5. This chapter, written by Trevor Watkins, traces the origins of agriculture back into the last Ice Age, rather than seeing it as a process that only started at the end of the Ice Age and the beginning of the Holocene period. The climatic changes, technology (microliths), sedentism and subsistence strategies all seem to be linked together as humans adapted to their changing environment. At the same time, the Natufians, the first identifiable cultural group living in settled villages, become recognisable. With the Neolithic period, the archaeological evidence seems to indicate a gradual development of agriculture and an associated increase in the complexity of

societies and settlements. Alongside this is the striking emergence of figurative art and symbolic ritual behaviour.

Within this story of the development of agriculture and human society, it is possible to observe evidence to support various of the five competing theories relating to the origins of agriculture. At the same time, the three key themes in the study of archaeology – humans and the environment, demographic growth, and symbols and cognition – can all be clearly seen in Southwest Asia at the end of the Ice Age and into the Neolithic period.

Exercise

I met with Trevor Watkins and Chris Scarre together to investigate further the origins of agriculture and the associated development of the first households. Now listen to this conversation on Track 2 of the audio CD.

Discussion

The audio discussion makes it clear that there is no single explanation for the origins of agriculture. What is more, it also underlines the fact that it is not possible to draw a clear line between subsistence based on hunter-gathering and subsistence based on agriculture. When studying subsistence it is possible to focus solely on the environmental conditions and the biological aspects of the domestication of plants and animals and to lose sight of the overall picture of human cultural development. Both Chris Scarre and Trevor Watkins make it clear that subsistence strategies cannot be taken in isolation. Symbolic and cultural behaviour developed alongside the transition from foraging to farming.

For the last part of this week's work you will be investigating the site of Çatalhöyük and learning how to assess websites. Çatalhöyük (see *HP*, p.217, pp.222–3), because of its importance, is well represented on the internet – looking for it with a search engine finds nearly 425,000 results. However, the problem for anyone using the internet for research is assessing the reliability and authority of any information that might be found. In the following exercise you will work with online tutorials provided by the Open University Library that teach a systematic and reliable approach to assessing resources on the internet. The skills that it teaches will enable you to assess any website you encounter. After you have finished the online tutorial, you will use this systematic approach to assess two websites relating to Çatalhöyük.

Exercise

Go to the course website and follow the link to the Library's Safari (skills in accessing, finding, and reviewing information), Section 5 'Evaluating information'. Work quickly through the tutorial by clicking on the titles of the sections in the tutorial on the left side of the screen and going through the pages by clicking on the page numbers in the bottom right corner. Some of the material there may be revision for you, or it may seem obvious. If so, so much the better, but do note that the tutorial is in effect providing you with a system for evaluating websites. It gives you a checklist to work through for each site you encounter in your online research. This will enable you to make

an informed decision as to the usefulness and appropriateness of a website to your studies. The tutorial guidance suggests that the work might take two or three hours – this is an extremely generous allowance and it should take you less time than that.

Discussion

Now you have learned the PROMPT system it is time to practise it.

Exercise

Go to the course website and select one website from each of the two lists containing websites relating to Çatalhöyük. Apply the PROMPT system to each site.

Discussion

Through applying the PROMPT system you should be able to identify which of the two websites you evaluated is useful and appropriate to your study and which is of limited use to you. You will be using these skills of evaluation later in the course, particularly in the ECA.

Now that you have studied the region where agriculture first developed it is time to move on to different regions, East Asia and the Americas, and study how agriculture developed there. You will be returning to Southwest Asia in Week 5, to study the first cities.

Week 3 The origins of agriculture: East Asia and the Americas

In Week 3 you will be using *The Human Past* (HP) and the internet.

East Asia: the Yangtze and Yellow River valleys

In this week's work you begin by studying the part of East Asia where agriculture first emerged – independently of developments elsewhere in the world. Agricultural origins in this region are possibly more complex, and less well understood, than in Southwest Asia.

Rather than simply reading Chapter 7 of *HP*, you will be taking an analytical approach to studying the first two sections. This will consist of reading a subsection, pausing and noting down the essential argument of the subsection, and relating it to what you have already learned about the origins of agriculture in other parts of the world. Practising taking structured notes like this now will help you to generate notes that will be useful to you later on when you come to write your TMAs.

Exercise

First read the introduction to Chapter 7 of *HP* (p.235) and take brief notes on the major features.

Discussion

Below are the essential points I noted. Yours may differ in detail but they should be similar to these:

- climate change
- hunter-gatherer societies start using millet and rice
- establishment of permanent villages
- construction of houses
- increase in burials
- population growth
- new crafts and skills develop
- hunting and gathering persists on the coasts and in the interior
- agriculturalists expand and mix with hunter-gatherers, but details are debated
- future genetic work may help understand the nature of the diaspora.

You may revise your notes now, if you wish to, to make sure they cover the essential points. You will be concentrating on the first seven of these points, leaving aside the persistence of hunter-gatherers and the spread of farming societies. These first points should be familiar to you – they are very similar to those you have already noted in Southwest Asia.

Exercise

Now read the first paragraph of the first section of Chapter 7 of *HP*, 'The transition to agriculture in East Asia' (p.235), and the first subsection 'The origins of millet cultivation', including the 'Early East Asia timeline' and material in boxes (pp.236–40). You will probably find this section challenging, largely because the place names and geography may be new to you. Unfortunately, the map (Figure 7.1, p.237) shows only major features and sites. We have therefore provided a supplementary map on the course website to help you get your bearings.

Take brief notes using the essential points you noted from the introduction as headings. Write down the important features in the discussion about each of the points – climate change, cultivation of millet and rice by hunter-gatherers, establishment of villages, new crafts and skills, etc. Try to match the evidence discussed in the subsection to each of the points.

Discussion

It would seem from the account in *HP* that evidence from the vital period of 7500–6000 BC is missing, so we are in the unsatisfactory situation of being able to see the situation before millet-based agriculture and after it was established, but we are not able to follow the changes step by step.

Exercise

Now perform the same analysis on the next subsection 'The origins of rice cultivation' (*HP*, pp.240–4).

Discussion

The evidence from the Yangtze River Valley provides a clearer picture of the development of agriculture than could be seen in the Yellow River Valley. On p.244 a parallel was drawn between the Yangtze and Southwest Asia. The similarities in the processes of development in the two areas should also be visible in your structured notes. The same seven points can be identified in the developments in Southwest Asia.

You will return to East Asia in Week 6. In the next section you will study two further areas where agriculture emerged independently, with different crops and different social consequences.

The Americas

The similarities between the emergence of agriculture in the Yangtze River Valley and Southwest Asia might suggest that there is some general process that could have led to similar developments in different parts of the world at the same time. One factor that operated in both areas was the change in climate, with conditions fluctuating between warm and wet and cold and dry at the end of the Ice Age. If we hypothesise that this changing climate was the key force behind the process, we can then test this hypothesis. We can do this by making a prediction based on the hypothesis – that the changing climate in other areas of the globe would also have led to the development of agriculture and the emergence of more complex sedentary human societies – and then studying the other areas to see if the prediction is correct.

First of all you will study Mesoamerica (the region also known as Central America), then you will go online to do some exercises on information gathering and referencing. You will then study Southwest North America and finally Eastern North America.

Exercise

Before you begin any reading, turn to the timeline on p.308 of *HP* or online from the course website. Look at the names of the periods in the top grey bar and at the top of each of the blue bars. Note that these names are different from those used in Southwest Asia (for example, as used in the timeline for Chapter 6 of *HP*, p.202).

Discussion

The period names 'Palaeolithic', 'Mesolithic' and 'Neolithic' that are commonly used in Europe and Asia are not used in the Americas. Instead, the main periods are named 'Paleoindian', 'Archaic' and 'Classic'. (On the timeline 'Basketmaker' and 'Woodland' are local subdivisions of the Classic period.) The different systems of periods are not interchangeable, although there are

similarities in the chronology and some technological characteristics between the Neolithic and the Archaic periods. In the archaeology of the Mediterranean, the terms 'Archaic' and 'Classic' have particular meanings within Greek archaeology, but they are unrelated to the periods in the Americas. The differences are partly due to the differences between the archaeology of the Old World and the New World, where the traditional European three-age system of Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age is not applicable because the use of metals for tools did not develop in the same way. It is also clear from the Americas timeline that the length of the periods, and the subdivisions within them, differ from region to region.

Exercise

Now read the following two sections of Chapter 9 of *HP*: 'The Archaic period, c.9500 BC onward' and 'The Mexican archaic and the origins of Mesoamerican agriculture, c.9500–2500 BC' (pp.313–16); read the 'Key controversy' box 'The domestication of maize' (p.317) last of all. As you read, note down the general differences between the development of agriculture in Mesoamerica and the other regions you have studied (there is no need to compare all the details). (Note that the 'Formative period' named on p.316 is also called the 'Preclassic period' and comes between the Archaic and Classic periods in Mesoamerica, see the Mesoamerican timeline on p.596, or online from the course website.)

Discussion

Obviously enough, the plant crops are completely different, although that did not seem to be a key issue in the similarities between Yangtze River Valley and Southwest Asia. However, the chronology is different: squash were domesticated c.8000 and the earliest known domesticated maize dates to c.4300 BC. The emergence of agriculture does not seem to have occurred in environmentally favoured areas nor to have led to increased sedentism and larger social groups.

In the box on p.317 of *HP* you read about the controversy surrounding the domestication of maize. Suppose you wanted to find out more about this controversy. You could follow up the references in *HP*, perhaps visiting a university library and finding a copy of the article by Piperno and Flannery published in 2001 (the details are to be found in the bibliography on p.740) that placed maize domestication before 4300 BC. Possibly more convenient is to find the article on the internet and read it almost instantly. Not all academic articles are available to read on the internet, but this one is. You can find a link to it on the course website. I am not asking you to read it now, although it is there if you wish to. Instead, I would like you to do a more general exercise giving you the opportunity to polish your skills in making accurate notes and references in your work and so avoid accidentally plagiarising the work of others. The internet is a rich resource for gathering information. Last week you practised assessing the quality of information on the internet, and this week you will be studying how to use that information.

Exercise

Go back to Safari from the course website and work through Section 6 'Organising information', Topic 5 'Citing references'.

Discussion

The tutorial makes it clear why citing correctly is important. It enables you to demonstrate what you have been reading and what you have identified as key points, important evidence or significant opinions. Citing therefore shows what you have understood from your reading and how you have absorbed and processed the information as you develop your own writing. This illustrates that you have achieved the most important learning outcomes in this course: a knowledge of and a critical understanding of the human past; the ability to apply knowledge and understanding to a range of problems; the ability to compare and use different approaches (details of the learning outcomes are given in the course introduction). Citing properly also enables you to separate your ideas from other people's ideas, and to organise and structure your own arguments in your writing. For example, you can compare other people's ideas and then come to your own conclusions about their competing claims and the weight of their evidence. Citing appropriately will therefore be important to your performance in your assignments

Another important function of citing is to help you to avoid inadvertent plagiarism. Always ask yourself 'Is what I've just written down my own idea?' – if it is not, you need to provide a citation (unless it is a generally known fact or date). Deliberate plagiarism, passing off other people's ideas or work as your own, is of course cheating, and demonstrates nothing about your own achievement. The OU has clear policies about plagiarism; you can find a link to them on the course website.

I am stressing the problem of plagiarism because this course is assessed with TMAs and an ECA, and your main sources of information for writing these will be the course text (*HP*), other published material (such as books, magazines and articles) and the internet. The internet – especially – makes it very easy to find information and then copy and paste it into your own work. This is simply deliberate plagiarism, and your tutor can spot it by detecting changes in style, and can prove it by entering the words into an internet search engine. Accidental plagiarism happens when you put information or ideas from a website into your own words when you write your assignment, and do not remember to cite the source of the information or ideas.

This is all very clear in theory, but how does it work in practice?

Exercise

Use your favourite search engine (e.g. Google, Yahoo, AltaVista – see the course website for some links) to search for 'maize domestication'. Look at four of the results you found. Rather than do a full evaluation of the websites, look at how the information they use is presented and consider how well they have cited their sources.

Discussion

I do not know which websites you found, but when I did the exercise the first site was an article from 2005 by two authors from Iowa State University in a scientific journal called *Biochemical Society Transactions*. It is densely footnoted with 54 footnotes on five pages all citing sources in books or articles in scientific journals. The citing is exemplary and very detailed, but to check how accurately their statements reflect what is in the sources they cite it would be necessary to find the works they were citing and compare what they say with what is in the source. One criticism that could be made is that some of the statements that are not supported by citations are not what I personally would call generally known facts, but then I am not a biochemist and perhaps to most of the readers of the journal such things are generally known. To some extent, then, the nature of the citations may vary according to the context of the work and also to the likely readers. So for you in the TMAs the best thing to do is consider 'generally known' as meaning generally known to your peer group of students and your tutor.

The second site was called 'EMuseum@Minnesota State University'. The text seemed reliable enough, but there was no proper citation at all, only a rather imprecise list of four authors and titles headed 'Resources'; presumably they refer to books for further reading but their relationship to the text on the page is not clear. It seems unlikely that the ideas are the original ideas of the author of the page, and there is no indication of who the author was.

The third site was 'The Buckler Lab for Maize Genetics and Diversity', and is associated with Cornell University. It all looked very impressive with plenty of scientific information, but citation was rare and inconsistent. There were three scientific publications listed at the bottom of the page; these were from 1984, 1987 and 1996, suggesting to me that it could be up to ten years out of date. Only one of these was cited in the text, and there was one other citation in the text that had no matching entry in the bibliography. From my point of view there was next to nothing in there that I would call 'generally known' and the density of the scientific information required many more citations to make it clear where the information is derived from. As it is, I have no way of assessing its reliability or knowing whose thoughts or ideas it contains.

The fourth is on an advertising-ridden website called 'LookSmart Find Articles' and contains a short journalistic report that refers generally to sources in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (one is an imprecise reference to the article by Piperno and Flannery I discussed above). There is one other citation which is simply '(SN: 5/24/97, p. 322)'. There is no further information, so it is meaningless.

I don't think that there is anything in any of these four web pages that is deliberately misleading or incorrect. However, three of them contain what would be called plagiarism if they were to be submitted as academic essays. Apart from the first, it is impossible to fully assess either whose ideas they contain or the accuracy of the information, because either a few incomplete or inconsistent citations are provided or none at all. I am sure the authors of the pages would claim that there is no need to cite sources because they are web pages providing information, not academic essays or assignments. Yet, as they stand, apart from the first, you can only use the PROMPT system on

them to assess their usefulness. One is from an academic journal, two are associated with universities, one is journalism, only two have identified authors, only the first reliably cites its sources. When you come to write your first TMA, which of the four sources you found on the internet would you use to support your academic argument?

This exercise illustrates some of the strengths and weaknesses of information provided on the internet, but the same is also true of printed articles, leaflets or magazines: they all need assessing before they can be used as reliable web sources. The annoying thing is that all of the information on the four web pages I saw could be true and reliable, but because of the way it is presented, there is no way of knowing that.

Now it is time to return to reading and continue the study of agriculture in Southwest North America and Eastern North America.

Exercise

Now read the following two sections of Chapter 9 of *HP*: 'Southwest North America' and 'Eastern North America' (pp.316–30), including the material in boxes. As you read, note down the general features of the development of agriculture in Southwest North America and Eastern North America.

Discussion

In these two very different areas there are two further stories of how agriculture developed. In the Southwest there seems to be a possibility that agriculture started with maize and squash cultivation spreading from further south and only later were local plants domesticated. It appears that there is still much to learn about the area and there are competing explanations for how agriculture developed. In Eastern North America it has only recently been discovered that various local species were domesticated before maize was introduced into the area. However, a wide range of different subsistence strategies seem to have been used by different societies in different areas, with hunter-gathering persisting in the north and south.

Conclusion

Now that you have learned about the origins of agriculture in various parts of the Americas, we can return to the hypothesis made at the start of this section: that changing climate was the key force behind the process. Is the prediction that the changing climate also led to the development of agriculture and the emergence of more complex sedentary human societies in the Americas a valid prediction? First, this is really two predictions, one about the development of agriculture and the other about the emergence of more complex societies. In the Americas, squash seems to have been domesticated c.8000 BC and this seems to coincide well with the establishment of warmer and wetter conditions after the last Ice Age (see *HP*, p.178, Figure 5.1). However, the evidence for maize domestication currently only extends back as far as 4300 BC, suggesting that it is unrelated to the end

of the Ice Age. The chronology of plant domestication within the Americas is then variable. In the Americas, therefore, the hypothesis only partially holds true. Generalising to the other areas you have studied, agriculture does emerge following climate change, but in each area the timing is slightly different: parts of Southwest Asia are precocious, parts of East Asia follow slightly later, but with different crops, and parts of the Americas are still later. On a scale of thousands of years, the emergence of agriculture does seem to be closely related to the end of the Ice Age, but on a scale of hundreds of years, a greater variability can be observed.

It is probably fair to still say that relatively little is known about the societies that participated in the emergence of agriculture. In the best studied area, Southwest Asia, it appears that these societies developed buildings, art, ritual behaviours and stable settlements at more or less the same time as agriculture emerged. This also appears to be the case in China, but in the Americas there seems to be a considerable delay in the appearance of more complex cultural behaviour and villages. So once again, the increasing sedentism and social complexity does generally appear to be a consequence of the end of the Ice Age, but again there is variety in the developments in different parts of the world. Furthermore, sedentism and social complexity are closely and intimately related to agriculture, but it is not possible to point to a clear causal relationship of the type 'climate change caused agriculture, and agriculture then caused sedentism and social complexity'. The web of interrelationships is more complex than this, and archaeological research is gradually finding new evidence and untangling the consequences of the end of the most recent Ice Age. In Block 2, you will be studying the increasing complexity of agricultural communities and the increasing size of their settlements in the warmer and wetter conditions of the Holocene period.

Week 4 Study week

This week you will work on your first TMA. Full details are given in the Assessment Booklet.

Further reading

The end of Chapter 1 of *HP* (p.43) contains some suggestions for further reading. (You will find references to further reading at the end of each chapter in *HP*.) In addition to these, if you would like to read more about the methodology, theory and practice of archaeology, the following are excellent places to start.

Greene, K. (2002) *Archaeology: An Introduction*, London, Routledge.

Johnson, M. (2001) *Archaeological Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell.

Renfrew, C. and Bahn, P.G. (2008) *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice*, London, Thames & Hudson.

Trigger, B. (2006) *A History of Archaeological Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Block 2 Cities and states

In this block you will study cities and states around the world. You will study many different cities, but all the time you will be looking out for similarities between them (while not entirely ignoring the differences). As in Block 1, your study will revolve around reading *The Human Past* and developing your information skills with internet-based exercises.

Week 5 The first cities in Asia and Africa

In Week 5 you will be using *The Human Past* (HP), the audio CD and the internet.

In this first week of Block 2 you will begin with some theoretical work looking at the development and definition of cities and states. Once you have the theoretical background, study will start with the first cities that developed in Southwest Asia. Then you will focus on ancient Egypt and finally move on to consider the remainder of Africa.

The consequences of agriculture

In Block 1 you examined how agriculture emerged in different places, in different environmental circumstances alongside a range of social and cultural developments. The first question to explore in Block 2 is what were the consequences for human societies of shifting to agriculture as the key mechanism for food provision?

Exercise

Read the last three sections of Chapter 5 of HP: 'The consequences of agriculture', 'Cities, states, and empires' and 'Summary and conclusions', including material in boxes (pp.190–9). This completes your reading of Chapter 5 and continues the overall synthesis of the development of agriculture and its consequences. As you read, briefly note down the developments that you think are the most significant.

Discussion

The headings of the subsections point you to the significant developments, but new forms of settlement, social complexity, material culture and agricultural intensification are all particularly important. Yet there does not seem to be a straightforward method to define and distinguish the subsequent stages of cities, states and civilisations. The 'Key controversy' box on pp.196–7 'Cities, states and civilizations defined and explained' doesn't quite live up to its title. Civilisations are the easiest to deal with. The term is now becoming a bit antiquated: peoples in the past are no longer regularly divided into civilised societies and barbaric societies; the division into two groups is too simple.

What is more, to imagine a progress from barbarism to civilisation is to assume a predetermined evolutionary path starting with a simple society that, as it develops, has a target of becoming a more complex society or civilisation. To some extent the term 'complex society' has taken over from the term 'civilisation', although you will find both terms used in *HP*. As noted in *HP*, 'civilisation' is still, however, a useful shorthand for referring to 'urban state-level societies' (p.196). And this brings us on to cities and states – the theme of this block. There are two related problems to investigate in the remainder of the block. The first is defining cities and states; the second is explaining how cities – along with states – developed. *HP* (p.196) noted that cities and states frequently go together, so we shall study them together. There seems to be an absence of agreement about what caused change in the development of cities and states, and *HP* suggests 'complex, multi-causal explanations' are now favoured rather than universal explanations (p.197).

In the remainder of this block you will study areas where cities and states emerged in more detail, and you will investigate questions of definition and processes of change. As you work you will be relating the details you study to the bigger questions 'What is a city? and 'Why did cities develop?'

Urbanism and the rise of civilisation

First of all, what is a city? In 1950, the eminent prehistorian V. Gordon Childe published an article describing 10 'abstract criteria, all deducible from archaeological data [that] serve to distinguish even the earliest cities from any older or contemporary village' (Childe, 1950, pp.9–16). Summarised, they are:

- 1 size – cities are more extensive and more dense than previous settlements
- 2 there is differentiation in the population of a city – not everyone produces their own food – there are craftsmen, officials, priests, etc.
- 3 there is payment of tax to a deity or king, who concentrated the surplus wealth of the community
- 4 there are monumental public buildings
- 5 those people not producing food are supported by the rulers, who held the surplus
- 6 systems of recording and practical science are needed
- 7 there is a system of writing
- 8 there is the development of symbolic art
- 9 there is trade – the importation of raw materials
- 10 the specialist craftsmen become members of a community that is defined by residence and not kinship.

As noted on p.196 of *HP*, these points describe a city rather than explain how and why it developed, but they do provide a useful checklist of the qualities found in cities. They have been much criticised and refined since they were first presented, but they still provide a rough guide that can be applied all around the world. The word 'urbanism' is often used as a shorthand for

describing the way of life of people living in cities, and so Childe's 10 criteria can be described as features of urbanism.

Exercise

Now listen to Track 3 on the audio CD. As you listen, note down any features of urbanism that don't seem to be included within Childe's 10 criteria.

Discussion

Perhaps surprisingly, after more than 50 years Childe's criteria still seem to be useful. The examples you have heard discussed do, however, introduce several further features. There is a general insistence on social complexity – although all of Childe's criteria are themselves aspects of complexity. More emphasis has also been placed on the role of individuals – leaders – in the formation of cities and on the role of religion in the formation of states and cities. There is a greater emphasis on the place of a city within a settlement hierarchy and its relationship to the surrounding territory, often described as a state. This point was introduced by Michael Smith in his description of the functional definition of cities. Unlike Childe's criteria, which describe features found in cities, Smith describes 'urban functions' that operate from the city out into the surrounding territory – the state.

Southwest Asia

The place to start detailed study is the place where cities first developed: Southwest Asia. This next reading continues the story of cultural development where it broke off at the end of Chapter 6.

Exercise

Now read the introduction and the first three sections of Chapter 12 of *HP* – 'Farmers of the early Chalcolithic', 'Urban communities of the late Chalcolithic' and 'City-states, kingdoms, and empires of the early Bronze Age, c.3000–2000 BC' – as far as the subsection 'Kingdoms and empires of the later 3rd millennium BC' (pp.433–45). As you read, briefly note down the principal features of cities in Southwest Asia. You will use these notes later to provide a comparison with the development of urbanism in other areas. You may find it useful to categorise your notes using Childe's criteria with the addition of the other features you have noted from the previous audio exercise.

Discussion

Although there seem to be many gaps in the archaeological record, what has survived is striking in several respects: the scale of sites such as Uruk is impressive, as are the elaborate buildings and the effort that societies put into building religious monuments. Uruk seems to fulfil all of the criteria defining a city that you have studied. If you think back to the three key themes in the study of archaeology that you investigated in Block 1 – humans and the environment; demographic growth; symbols and cognition – it seems that perhaps the natural environment is playing a lesser role and, although demographic growth is clearly necessary for the development of populous

cities, the symbolic and cognitive themes are emerging as important. This can be seen particularly in the development of identifiable ritual buildings and the invention of writing as a technique for communicating knowledge. It also seems that Uruk developed quite rapidly into a large city and then even into a state and regional power, transferring its culture to other settlements. However, this rapidity may be something of an illusion since the Uruk period did actually last for some 1200 years.

Currently, it is believed that cities first developed in Southwest Asia, but complex settlements, dating only slightly later, have recently been found in Egypt. There is no direct evidence for the idea of a city spreading from Mesopotamia to not-too-distant Egypt, but our knowledge of the earliest cities in Egypt is still poor. This period has attracted less attention than later, more glamorous times, and much must still lie, waiting to be discovered, deep below the silts of the Nile.

Ancient Egypt

Exercise

Now turn to Chapter 10 of *HP* and read the section 'Urbanization and the growth of social complexity in Ancient Egypt', including material in boxes (pp.370–9). As you read, note down the significant features of urbanism in Egypt. You will use these notes later to provide a comparison with the development of urbanism in other areas.

Discussion

The exceptional environmental circumstances of the annual flooding of the Nile led to a particularly effective system of agricultural production. Urban centres had a variety of (or combination of) functions, for example administrative, cult, craft or military centres. Another feature is the emergence of 'kings' – high status dynastic rulers, with a cult role – at the beginning of the third millennium, the same time as in Sumer. The significance of secular and religious leaders has already been introduced in Track 3 of the audio CD, where it was discussed with reference to Egypt in general and Hierakonpolis in particular.

A distinctive feature of ancient Egypt is the monumental commemoration of the kings with pyramids. The burials at Hierakonpolis are possibly the earliest to be marked by monumental structures, but the first large stone pyramid is the 'step pyramid' at Saqqara. This archaeological site will now be the focus of a sequence of exercises that will help you develop your information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Exercise

Search the internet for 'Saqqara' using your favourite search engine (some are listed on the course website). Notice the number of results you find, and quickly consider the variety of the results.

Discussion

At the time of writing, entering 'Saqqara' as a search term produced nearly 420,000 results using Google, over 1.5 million with Yahoo, nearly 71,000 with Ask and over 1.5 million with AltaVista. This illustrates the mass of undifferentiated information available on the internet. Many of these web pages do refer to the archaeological site, but there are others that are not relevant; for example, Saqqara also seems to be the name of an IT company, an Egyptian bar in Brighton and a Spanish heavy metal band!

Near to the top of the list of your results will be an internet site called Wikipedia. Wikipedia is a rather unusual type of online encyclopaedia.

Exercise

Go now to the Wikipedia entry for Saqqara and apply the PROMPT criteria to the entry. (A direct link is provided on the course website.)

Discussion

This is what I came up with.

- Presentation – pages in Wikipedia are well laid out, clear and readable.
- Relevance – The information provides a description, images of the site and links to more detailed information. It is a useful starting point for finding out general information quickly.
- Objectivity – The articles in Wikipedia contain information and opinion from several contributors, which can help to provide objectivity (see the 'history tab' at the top of each page). The principal idea behind Wikipedia is that, given time, any purely subjective or incorrect information that is entered will be removed or improved by other readers. The idea is that the encyclopaedia-style entries will gradually evolve and become more accurate and useful.
- Method – This is not really applicable because it is not clear how any research used in producing the page was carried out and it is not possible to judge whether the methods were appropriate.
- Provenance – Wikipedia is a free, online encyclopaedia that is collaboratively written by many people. Anyone can contribute to it by editing existing articles. The authors are not identified so there is no way of knowing whether they are experts in their subject or whether the material is original or copied from elsewhere. It is always a good idea to check information against other sources. Very often the source of particular information is not cited, so it is not easy to check or verify the unsupported statements.
- Timeliness – Each page of Wikipedia has a 'history tab' at the top of each page. This shows when a page was last modified so you can check on how recently it was changed, but there is no indication of whether the information presented is up-to-date.

So do you think Wikipedia is a reliable source of information? The answer has to be a reluctant 'No'. Although the information looks good, and is quite detailed, it has no authority. It was written by anyone who wanted to write it. It is largely unsupported by references and citations of sources. Although anyone can correct inaccuracies or subjective statements, the pages are equally open to vandalism – the deliberate insertion of misleading or incorrect information. Although this makes the pages inherently unreliable, it does not necessarily make them wrong. The entry on Saqqara, for example, is actually quite a good account of the site. But would you cite Wikipedia as a source of information when writing an assignment? The answer again has to be 'No' because it has no authority and may be inaccurate. Could you use it as a general item of bibliography concerning Saqqara? Possibly, if you judge it to be reliable. But how can you judge? The answer is by checking it against other more authoritative sources of information. These might be other more authoritative or academic websites, or other encyclopaedias or data sources.

Exercise

Look up 'Saqqara' in the online version of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* (there is a link on the course website).

Discussion

This 'authoritative' source doesn't contradict anything in Wikipedia, but it is very brief and even contains an assertion that Saqqara is in southern Egypt, which appears to be inaccurate.

Exercise

Now look up 'Saqqara' in the online version of *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* (there is a link on the course website).

Discussion

There are two results for Saqqara: one is in the article 'Egypt: Old Kingdom Egypt'; the other is in the article 'Egypt: Middle Kingdom Egypt'. This 'authoritative' source is more informative, but it discusses Saqqara in the context of Early Egypt, rather than discussing the site in its own right as an individual encyclopaedia entry. There are, however, issues of accuracy emerging. The article says that Djoser's step pyramid is 77 m high; at the time of writing, the Wikipedia page 'Pyramid of Djoser' says it is 62 m high. Which is correct? I don't know, I would need to check it elsewhere to see if there is a consensus, or authoritative answer. In any case, such differences are minor and the pyramid is not perfectly preserved and so any assessment of its original height will be an approximation.

So is the online version of *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* a reliable source, and one that you would cite for an essay assignment? Yes, it is a reliable source, because it is written by authorities on the subject and published by a reputable publisher. However, it does not give detailed information about Saqqara, and it does not cite sources for its statements about the site. If you were writing an essay that was closely focused on the

site of Saqqara, you would need more detailed information. For a more general essay on Egypt, though, it would be sufficient.

Exercise

You have now searched for information on a specific topic using four different methods: a general search engine; Wikipedia; and the online versions of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* and *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. How useful to your academic study is the information resulting from each of these sources of information? How would you use the results you have obtained from them when writing an assignment?

Discussion

Using a general search engine may produce some interesting and useful results, but being presented with hundreds, or even thousands, of web pages makes it difficult to separate reliable and usable resources from time-wasting websites. There is usually no indication of how authoritative each is, and vetting each one using the PROMPT criteria is itself time-consuming. As you have discovered, using a general search engine can be an effective method of finding academically sound information, but equally it can lead to misinformation and irrelevance. A useful approach is to scan the results of a search, quickly eliminate the obviously irrelevant and non-academic sites and use PROMPT only on the sites that appear likely to contain reliable and useful information.

Wikipedia comes with a health warning – the information it provides may or may not be reliable, as it depends on the reliability of the anonymous contributors. Provided you remember this, though, it is useful for gaining a quick overview of a subject. If you are interested in Wikipedia, you can find out more about how it works from links on the course website.

The information in the online version of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* has the authority of being published by a reputable publisher. However, the entry on Saqqara seems too brief to be useful for academic purposes, and contains a worrying inaccuracy. It is useful for gaining a brief summary of a topic or a site, but it does not contain in-depth information.

The online version of *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* is a reliable resource: the content is authoritative. However, it does not necessarily give details about individual sites, and does not cite its sources. It could prove a useful source of information, provided the entries it contains are focused on the topic you are researching. It may provide more information about, or a more in-depth discussion of, some topics than *HP*.

Egypt lies in a very particular location at the point where the Nile flows through the desert and into the Mediterranean Sea; it also lies in the northeast corner of the continent of Africa. Chris Scarre makes the point (*HP*, p.197) that each state or city displays the results of a general set of processes, such as population increase, agricultural intensification and social competition, but also that each is a product of its own circumstances. Ancient Egyptian urbanism and the state are, then, products of their own circumstances, even though they both display features that are common to cities and states

elsewhere. As you work through this block, you will be gathering examples of the significant features of urbanism in different areas that you will later use as evidence to compare and analyse the general processes and their effects in different regions. In the next section you will study the remainder of Africa and the varied urbanism that can be found within that vast continent.

Africa

In Africa, a wide range of different forms of urbanism emerged, with different forces acting during their formation.

Exercise

Read the last three sections of Chapter 10 of *HP*: 'Urbanisation and state formation in the rest of Africa', 'Africa and the outside world' and 'Summary and conclusions', including material in boxes (pp.380–91). As you read, note briefly the significant features of urbanism in the various parts of Africa. You will use these notes later to provide a comparison with the development of urbanism in other areas. Once again, you may find it useful to structure your notes around the various attributes of urbanism.

Discussion

Although this panoramic discussion of urbanism in Africa goes into less detail about individual areas than your previous reading, it is clear that there was a great variety of communities in the continent, and that the definition of what constitutes a city needs to be drawn very loosely in order to include all the possible sites. The emergence of elites and the development of agriculture and metallurgy seem to be important general processes, but so do the diffusion of ideas and external influence on societies. A general observation that this chapter makes clear is that urbanism became a way of living at many different times, between the fourth millennium BC in Egypt and the middle of the second millennium AD in different parts of Africa.

In Week 5, you have studied general aspects of urbanism and investigated in detail the first cities. Your study has moved from Southwest Asia into Africa, and ranged from the fourth millennium BC to the nineteenth century AD. In Week 6, you will investigate the Mediterranean, South Asia and East Asia, and develop the comparisons between cities in different parts of the world.

Week 6 The first urbanism in the Mediterranean, South Asia and East Asia

In Week 6 you will be using *The Human Past (HP)* and the internet.

In this week's work, you will continue your study of cities, looking first at the earliest evidence for cities in the Mediterranean and then moving on to

the Indian subcontinent and to China, areas where cities appear to have developed independently.

The Mediterranean Bronze Age

The earliest cities are found in Southwest Asia and Egypt, and for a long time these were the only areas with cities. The urban way of life spread only very slowly across the Mediterranean towards Europe.

Exercise

Now read the introduction and the first two sections of Chapter 13 of *HP*: 'Defining the Mediterranean, redefining its study' and 'The Bronze Age', including material in boxes (pp.473–86). This part of the chapter first discusses the Mediterranean generally and then focuses on the development of 'Palace' societies around the Aegean. As you read, note briefly the significant features of these societies and their settlements. You may find it helpful to continue structuring your notes around the features of urbanism that you have already identified. (You will read the remainder of Chapter 13 in Block 3.)

Discussion

Urbanism appears to be rather limited in the Bronze Age Mediterranean. Large settlements seem confined to the shores of the Aegean, and, although *HP* does not go into the details, explanations for the development of cities and their relationship to cities in Southwest Asia seem to be controversial (*HP*, p.477). The chapter's authors seem very reluctant to apply the word 'city' to the settlements. There is occasional mention of 'towns', 'citadels' and 'states', and the term 'palace' is hesitantly applied. These characteristics can also be seen in the relevant entries in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. Yet if you apply the criteria we have identified, many, if not all, of Childe's criteria are apparent, and so are the 'urban functions' that operate from the city out into the surrounding territory discussed by Michael Smith on Track 3 of the audio CD. Perhaps the only criterion about which there is any doubt is Childe's first criterion, concerning the size and density of the population, but the *HP* chapter does not discuss population sizes. However, excavation seems to have focused on the monumental palaces rather than the residential areas, so there is not much knowledge of the extensive settlements around the larger palaces such as Knossos or Mycenae. By all of our definitions, then, these 'palace-states' should probably be considered as urban settlements – the first in Europe.

You will continue studying the Mediterranean in Block 3, when distinctive and long-lasting forms of urbanism emerge, along with the empires of Athens and Rome. But now it is time to move on to a new area of the world: South Asia.

South Asia

South Asia is a huge area and its archaeology is very complex and, in some areas, poorly understood. However, in one part of the subcontinent, the **Indus Valley**, a clear trajectory of urban development from independent origins may be detected and described. Once again, studying a specific area reveals similarities and differences between different areas of the world. Before you start reading Chapter 14 of *HP*, take a look at the timeline on p.520, or online from the course website, and the map on p.521, to familiarise yourself with the chronology and geography of the Indian subcontinent.

Exercise

Now read the following four sections of Chapter 14 of *HP*: 'An era of regionalization', 'An era of integration', 'An era of localization' and 'The re-emergence of regionalized complexity, c.1200–500 bc', including material in boxes (pp.528–44). As you read, note briefly the main features of urbanism and the factors important to its development.

Discussion

There are many similarities in the forms of urbanism and the processes involved between the Indus Valley and the areas you have previously studied. Nevertheless, a remarkable difference is the apparent absence of a social elite. In the cases you have studied so far, the role of the elite seems to have been central to the development of the first cities. The apparent absence in the Indus Valley suggests that even if the elite were central to city formation, they were not essential. Another feature of the history of urbanism is that the first Indus Valley cities seem to have been abandoned and their culture more or less lost, and there was then a second, independent phase of urbanisation between 1200 and 500 bc.

One of the limitations of working with a course text such as *HP* is that, by its nature, it needs to compress and synthesise information to provide a short overview of complex topics. The synthesis it provides is derived from a large quantity of supporting background research, but is necessarily selective about what it can discuss and present in the form of information and illustrations. The following exercise is designed to introduce you to a different way of finding information on the internet, to supplement what is in *HP* and also to explore more information relating to the Indus civilisation. One of the problems with the internet is that there is so much of it. One solution is to use a search engine to find things. However, as you found last week, this often produces irrelevant or low-quality results. Even though you entered a fairly obscure word, 'Saqqara', as the search term, the search engine still produced irrelevant sites and sites that were devoted to leisure or general information topics. One solution to filter out the mass of irrelevant information is to use a particular type of website known as a 'portal' or 'gateway'. These sites contain pre-selected links to websites that have been assessed as useful and relevant. In the following exercise you will use a portal called 'Intute: Arts and Humanities', which contains links to other sites that have been assessed as useful in higher education.

Exercise

Select 'Intute: Arts and Humanities' from the course website. All the links in Intute are checked for quality and relevance to the subjects covered by the gateway. They are also classified according to the different topics that the gateway covers. This allows you to narrow your search to the subject that interests you: you can browse through the resources listed within each section, or search within a section for resources on a more specific subject. Select the link for 'Archaeology' and you will see a list of subtopics. You can browse these subtopics to find information, but you can also do a specific search. Enter 'Indus Valley' in the search box and search for the words. This will return a number of results. If you click on the titles of the results you will be taken directly to those sites. However, as well as the website link there is also a brief description of the contents, so that you can assess whether it will be worthwhile for you to visit the site. You can now visit the sites to learn more about the Indus Valley, if you wish.

Discussion

You could, if you wanted, apply the PROMPT methodology to the websites you found via Intute, but the whole point of the portal is that someone else has already assessed the relevance and usefulness of the site so that you do not have to. There are many different portals: you can find more on the course website. Of course, they vary in quality. Intute is publicly funded and produced by information and subject specialists in the UK higher education community, and so the quality of the links it contains is likely to be higher than those in many other portals. In effect, a portal can be a shortcut to effective searching, but you will only ever find links that have been pre-selected. There is no guarantee that *all* relevant websites will be represented, only that the websites listed have been evaluated before they were included.

Your notes on urbanism will now be growing. They will be useful to you as you prepare your TMA at the end of the block.

East Asia

In this section you will continue your study of East Asia, which you began in Week 3, by reading about the first cities in China.

Exercise

Turn to Chapter 15 of *HP* and read the first part of the first section – 'China' – as far as the subsection heading 'The Western Zhou Dynasty, 1045–771 BC' (pp.553–63), including material in boxes. As before, note briefly significant aspects of urban and social development in East Asia. It is slightly more difficult to make analytical notes on this chapter because it is written in a more descriptive style. You need to see beyond the description. Try to identify processes of change and development, and look for factors you have already seen in the development of cities elsewhere, such as increased settlement size, the emergence of social complexity and elite differentiation.

Discussion

This account of complex societies and the first cities in China does not go into any detail about why the cities developed. However, there are familiar processes at work – for example, the emergence of an elite, large, defended, settlements, specialist crafts and the use of writing.

You will continue your study of China in Block 3, when you investigate the emergence of Imperial China. Next week it is time to return to the other side of the world and study the first cities in Mesoamerica.

Week 7 Urbanism in Mesoamerica

In Week 7 you will be using *The Human Past* (HP) and the internet.

In this week the focus will be on Mesoamerica. Here, in what were essentially Stone Age societies, without the wheel or beasts of burden, a dazzling sequence of urban societies developed and changed, completely independently of any contact with the Old World. This allows us to compare two completely separate instances of the development of urbanism.

Mesoamerica

The term 'Mesoamerican' is frequently used to refer to the various cultures and civilisations that existed in Mesoamerica – the modern states of Mexico, Yucatan, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and San Salvador – before the Spanish conquest of the area in the sixteenth century. These societies developed in complete isolation from the Old World and Australian societies you have studied up to now. This isolation provides a perfect laboratory for seeing whether or not the features of urbanism and the characteristic processes of urbanisation that you have studied elsewhere are replicated in this new, unrelated area.

Exercise

As you are about to find out, Mesoamerica held a diversity of cultures, many of which became urban. The three you will concentrate on are the Olmecs, the Maya and the peoples of the Basin of Mexico. Read the introduction and the first eight sections of Chapter 16 of *HP*, including material in boxes, stopping at the section 'Mesoamerica discovered' (pp.595–633). As you read, note down the significant features of urbanism in each of these three peoples, and the processes that are identified as leading to urbanisation. Keeping in mind the features you have been observing in other cultures will help you to identify similar features in Mesoamerica.

Discussion

That was a long read! You will have read that there is a great variety of settlements that can be called cities in Mesoamerica. The 'Key controversy'

box 'Mesoamerican urbanism' (p.628) addresses this issue, and even suggests that the category 'city' might be inappropriate to many of these sites. It concludes with a rather narrow definition of 'true cities' as places where dense populations were supplied with food. The authors of the chapter seem reluctant to compare cities in Mesoamerica with cities elsewhere, and seem more restrictive in their recognition of cities than Michael Smith or Norman Hammond. However, your study in this block, and the notes that you have taken from your study of urbanism in various areas of the world, should enable you to compare the features you have observed elsewhere with the evidence from Mesoamerica and decide for yourself which settlements could, or should, be called cities. What would Childe think?

As a final exercise in this block you will explore further parts of the internet that enable you to dig behind the synthetic account provided in *HP* and give you access to actual archaeological data, from which the synthesis is derived.

Exercise

Return to the 'Intute: Arts and Humanities' portal, 'Archaeology' section (there is a direct link on the course website), and search for 'Maya' (you don't have to type the initial capital letter). In the list of results, go down to the 'Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies' (FAMSI) entry (note: not the FAMSI research materials – search the databases entry, it may be on the second page of results). Read the summary and then select the title to go to the FAMSI home page. Type the name of the Maya city 'Chichén Itzá' (you don't need to type the accents) in the search box and then click the Search button. The site will display a variety of results. Click on a number of them to explore the resources that are available relating to Chichén Itzá. You can use the Back button on your browser to return to the search results.

Discussion

The resources on the FAMSI website are particularly useful because they are carefully documented. Full details of the images, for example, are presented along with the drawings and photos themselves. These are the types of image you might find useful in researching and presenting your assignments. You could also use your favourite browser to search for images, but even if you search for 'chichen' and 'famsi' together you will not find these images because the search engines only index web pages, not image databases.

You will continue your study of Mesoamerica in Block 3 with the Aztec empire.

Conclusion

Now that you have studied urbanism you will have seen that it is a global phenomenon. However, it appears that while urban living developed independently in several regions of the world, at different times, sometimes the urban way of life spread from one area to another as a result of contact between societies. Although urbanism may be global, it is by no means

uniform. A great variety of physical built environments and forms of society can be called urban. Despite this variety, the criteria you have been using to define, or at the very least describe, a city can almost all be seen to be present in most urban societies, even if in some cases some criteria may be less visible, or less researched, than others. The processes that led to urbanism will also have varied from area to area, but again there are recurrent features: demographic increase, social complexity, agricultural intensification, and leadership by an elite allied to religious power all seem to be important contributors to the emergence of cities.

Week 8 Study week

This week you will work on your second TMA. Full details are given in the Assessment Booklet.

References

Childe, V.G. (1950) 'The urban revolution', *Town Planning Review*, vol.23, pp.3–17.

Further reading

Storey, G.R. (2006) *Urbanism in the Preindustrial World: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press.

Trigger, B. (2007) *Understanding Early Civilizations: A Comparative Study*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Block 3 States and empires

In the first two blocks you have studied increasingly complex societies; this trend will continue in Block 3, where you will study the even larger societies that formed empires.

Week 9 Asian empires

In Week 9 you will be using *The Human Past* (HP) and the internet.

Defining states and empires

Throughout Block 2, the emphasis was placed on defining and identifying cities, but it was acknowledged that cities are very closely related to states. Just as cities and states are closely related, so are states and empires. Now we will take the opportunity to consider whether the definition of states, independently of cities, is possible.

Exercise

Go to the course website and select the link to *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. Search for 'states' and read the short article 'Theories of the origins of states'. Note down the features of states that are familiar because they are also characteristics of cities.

Discussion

In Block 2 we were keen to identify the characteristics of a city; now it seems that there is little that may be identified as a feature of a state that is not also a characteristic of a city. The article takes a theoretical view, and covers a similar range of theories to those presented in the 'Key controversy' box 'Cities, states and civilizations defined and explained' (HP, pp.196–7), where little attempt was made to separate cities from states. The article suggests that theories of state formation may be considered as either 'integrative' or 'coercive', and that they may also be divided into three groups by considering the operation of three key processes: warfare, the production of resources and the exchange of resources. All the examples of state formation you have read about while studying cities readily fit into these two categories of theories, and the three processes are also familiar. There has been some debate as to whether states have ever existed in the absence of cities. In a 'territorial state', power would be concentrated in royal palaces, religious centres or a network of smaller towns, rather than in a capital city. The existence of 'territorial states' has been suggested in Egypt, Shang China and the Inca empire (Trigger, 2007). However, there were cities in all three of these societies. The debate concerns the extent to which the cities were a key part of the state organisation rather than the existence of cities themselves. There is no general agreement that 'territorial states' actually existed in pre-modern times.

At the end of Chapter 5 of *HP* (pp.198–9) you read a brief description of what the term ‘empire’ implies: a territorially extensive and expanding political entity, comprising states driven together by a desire for security, economic gain or by personal ambition. A tendency for cyclical growth and collapse was also noted, and it was suggested that this was caused by insufficient integration or administration. Empires absorb states and recreate them as provinces with some degree of autonomy. The result is a multi-ethnic and multilingual agglomeration of cultures held together by an administration, obligations such as taxation and tribute, and the exercise of force to combat internal dissent and external threat. This description of empires clearly considers them to be an agglomeration of states, almost as a superstructure holding constituent states together, and with the states subservient to the imperial power

Key features of empires are:

- the domination of states and peoples by another state or people
- this domination usually extends over a wide geographical area
- the development of a system of political control or government (perhaps with provinces or subject-kings)
- a bureaucracy empowered by writing
- some degree of political or economic unification, but with cultural and ethnic diversity.

The processes involved in, and motivations for, empire building include:

- economic gain
- the extension or maintenance of personal, dynastic or state power
- maintaining security from neighbouring rivals, or external enemies
- possibly ideological or religious motivation.

These are the essential elements of an empire, but their relative importance will vary from case to case, and other factors may be important in individual situations. Throughout this block you will be reading about a wide range of states and empires from around the world. As you read, gather notes about the essential features of empires and write down examples of how empires function and of the features of societies that lived in empires.

Southwest Asia

As you saw in Blocks 1 and 2, Southwest Asia was the location where the first agriculture and the first cities developed. It was also home to the first known empire, the Akkadian empire, as you will see in the next exercise. You begin your work this week by picking up where you left off in Week 5 and studying Southwest Asia in the third to the first millennia BC. The timeline on p.434 of *HP* and on the course website provides you with an overview of the structure of the chronological periods and the various names and dates of the different phases of social development.

Exercise

Turn to Chapter 12 of *HP*, start reading from the subsection 'Kingdoms and empires of the later 3rd millennium bc' and continue to the end of the chapter, including material in boxes (pp.446–71). As you read, note down the main features of the various empires that came and went between the third and the first millennia bc. Concentrate on distilling out the most important issues and features of the empires, not the details of individuals, places and dates.

Discussion

Over the period of time discussed in the chapter there was a long sequence of social and political development. The 'Summary and conclusions' section (pp.469–71) emphasises continuity through the period and highlights the important features of empires in the region. However, you will also have gained the impression that some of these empires – particularly the earlier ones – are not really very well known at all. The Akkadian empire, for example, seems particularly shadowy. In some cases, it is useful to ask what the evidence for imperial status actually is. Has an abstract, theoretical model been applied to a limited body of evidence in order to identify an empire? How illusory are some of these empires? Clearly, more evidence is needed to answer such questions.

Exercise

To gather more evidence about some of these empires, go to *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* from the course website and search for 'Akkad'. In the resulting entries, read the section 'Akkadian Period'. Do you think that this discussion provides good evidence for the identification of the Akkadian state as an empire?

Discussion

Knowledge of the Akkadian empire still seems rather limited. Although the *Companion* entry does confidently assert that it was an empire, the supporting evidence is limited to territorial conquest, the creation of provinces and manipulation of religious institutions.

Exercise

Another empire discussed in Chapter 12 is the Hittite empire. Excavations at the Hittite capital of Hattusa (sometimes spelt Hattusha) have uncovered significant parts of the city. Visit the web pages of the excavation to tour the city (you can access these from the course website) and see also the 'Key site' box 'Hattusa, capital of the Hittites' in *HP* (p.454); note any evidence that may be used to define Hittite society as an empire.

Discussion

At Hattusa there is evidence for imperial status. The city is large and well defended, there is evidence of trade, a large royal palace (Büyükkale), highly organised religion and extensive residential areas; these could, though, all be features of a city at the centre of a state. The evidence for the Hittite empire

comes more from the written cuneiform archives found at the site (and elsewhere) that document the history of the Hittite kings and their conquest of the far-flung areas that made up their empire.

The 'Summary and conclusions' section of Chapter 12 (*HP*, pp.469–71) emphasises the continuities that may be observed across centuries, if not millennia, of cultural development in Southwest Asia, despite the fact that states and empires may have individually experienced periods of ascendancy and decline. This observation – that the political organisation of states and empires is highly variable while the subsistence base, environmental adaptation, patterns of trade and exchange and basic way of life is relatively stable – suggests that many different forms of political organisation are possible within an unchanged set of underlying circumstances.

Imperial China

Your study now moves on, forward in time, to China. In Week 6 you studied China in the second millennium bc, when complex, literate, urban societies built huge settlements. Now the story of cultural development will be continued and an imperial system emerges.

Exercise

Now read the remainder of the section entitled 'China' in Chapter 15 of *HP* (which you began in Week 6), starting with the subsection 'The Western Zhou dynasty, 1045–771 bc' and ending when you reach the section entitled 'Korea', including material in boxes (pp.563–74). As you read, note down the distinctive features of empires that you discern. Try to decide for yourself when you think the societies of China became an empire.

Discussion

The easy answer is to follow the text and claim that Qin Shi Huangdi was the first emperor, so that was when China became an empire. However, if you apply the criteria for defining and identifying empires that you have been developing, you will have seen many of the characteristics of empire emerging before his reign, particularly in the social organisation and the level of political dominance achieved by some of the Zhou dynasty states. It seems that the key differences between the empire and the previous political organisation is scale and the creation of a uniform system of imperial government (the commanderies and governors).

Although the scale and richness of an exceptional site such as Qin Shi Huangdi's tomb at Lintong, complete with its terracotta army, is an unambiguous statement of power, much of what is known about the empire seems to derive from written sources rather than solely from archaeological finds. This increase in the quality, and quantity, of the available written sources means that it is possible to write a more historical account of the empire. This change in the nature of the available evidence is reflected in the character of the text in *HP*. Compared with the other chapters in *HP*, the text

of the section dealing with imperial China provides a much more historically oriented narrative: there are more precise dates, there are names of individuals and their actions are discussed. Overall, there is more emphasis on individual events rather than on more general processes or changes in social structures. This commonly happens when discussing societies that are becoming more historical, as opposed to prehistorical. However, it is not the case that all the processes that are present in prehistoric societies cease as soon as a society becomes documented by historical records; only that these more archaeological accounts need to be considered alongside the historical accounts that it is now possible to write.

Korea and Japan

Staying in East Asia but moving on to study Korea, there is a chance to see the effects of an empire on a neighbour that was first occupied and then became imperial provinces. For hundreds of years, Northern Korea was in effect part of the Chinese empire. However, its provincial status, and the influence of the Chinese empire, stimulated indigenous political and social development.

Exercise

Now read the next section of Chapter 15 of *HP*: 'Korea' (pp.574–7). As you read, look out for and note down instances of contact or influence from imperial China and any indicators of an imperial system emerging in Korea.

Discussion

There are frequent contacts with China, at many different levels: trade, language, politics, architecture and religion, for example. Yet after the fourth century AD, the Korean states seem to be politically independent of imperial China. Did you find any traces of an emerging empire in Korea? There certainly seems to have been a succession of powerful regional states, and Great Silla entailed the unification of Korea, but it does not appear to add up to being an empire – according to the criteria we have been developing. Admittedly, *HP* does not provide much detail, but the Korean states seem, at most, to have been powerful kingdoms that were independent of the Han empire.

If the title 'empire' does not seem to be appropriate to Korea at this time, what about its near neighbour Japan, 200 km across the Korea Strait?

Exercise

Now read the next section of Chapter 15 of *HP*: 'Japan' (pp.577–82). Look for and note down any evidence of the development of imperial characteristics in Japan.

Discussion

Once again, there is little trace of empire but clear evidence for a developed and powerful centralised state in the Yamato kingdom. Both Yamato and the

'Asuka enlightenment' seem to have borrowed ideas and practices from imperial China as well as Korea. However, on p.580 you read of 'Empress Suiko' and 'imperially appointed ranks' and on p.581, 'Emperor Tenmu'. These terms might seem to suggest the presence of an empire, but in reality they derive from the fact that the title of the divine ruler, '*tenno*', is usually translated from the Japanese as 'emperor'. The title survived into later times, when Japan was indeed an imperial power, but at this period, in the third quarter of the seventh century AD, there is not strong evidence for an empire as defined in archaeological terms.

Although *HP* sidesteps the matter, the relationship between imperial China and the states of Korea and Japan is rather controversial. This is in large measure due to the subsequent history of the area, even up to the present day. Imperial China and Japan have both subsequently dominated the Korean peninsula and Manchuria to the north, whilst Korea has been, and is, keen to assert its national and indigenous cultural identity and to emphasise elements of Japanese culture that were stimulated by contact with Korea.

In the next week you will complete your study of Asia by working on Southeast Asia, including the site of Ankor, and then return to the Americas to study empires.

Week 10 Southeast Asian states and American empires

In Week 10 you will be using *The Human Past* (*HP*) and the internet.

This week you will begin by completing your reading about Southeast Asia. You will then continue your study of empires in Mesoamerica, picking up the story of the Maya states and the Aztec empire from where you stopped in Week 7, and move on to South America to study the Inca empire.

Southeast Asia

Up to this point in Block 3, the only clear example of an archaeological empire that you have identified in East Asia is imperial China. It has not, so far, been possible to detect clear evidence for other empires in the region. This situation is repeated in the remainder of Southeast Asia that you are about to study. Rather than focusing on the negative elements of why these other cultures were not empires, I would like to look at the issues the other way round and focus on the salient features of the states and kingdoms that developed in the region.

Exercise

Now read the final three sections of Chapter 15 of *HP*: 'The Central Asian silk road', including the 'Key discovery' box on p.583, 'The Southeast Asian maritime silk road' and 'Summary and Conclusions', including material in boxes (pp.582–93). As you read, make notes on what characterises the

various states you are studying, collecting together related characteristics from different states. At the same time, note down what types of evidence, archaeological or historical, are being used in the account you read.

Discussion

The end of this chapter presents something of a whirlwind of different peoples, sites and kings. Overall, an image of complexity and great variability is created. However, from all of this you will have noted various constantly recurring features. This is the list of characteristics I noted:

- long-distance trade
- monetary systems
- religion (especially Buddhism)
- temples
- kings and dynasties
- courts
- crafts
- warfare
- walled cities
- administration
- external influence (from China)
- intensive rice cultivation
- control of water resources.

All these features are familiar from complex societies that you have studied elsewhere in the world. However, how they are manifested in the archaeological record does vary from region to region. Despite this variability, it is possible to find structural similarities between different societies in terms of their complexity and state organisation.

Turning to the nature of the evidence, the list of different types I noted was:

- linguistic
- documents (historical – Chinese)
- writing systems
- religious buildings
- coins
- cities
- burials (in some areas)
- art
- architecture
- artefacts.

All these you have already encountered elsewhere, but it seems to me, that, as in the section on imperial China, the narrative synthesis of the archaeological developments in *HP* in this region is more dominated by the written and historical sources than elsewhere. Much of the account concerns the documented achievements of individual rulers and accounts that survive in Chinese history. There seems to be less about the non-elite, housing, villages

and subsistence. Perhaps this is a result of the relative infancy of archaeology in this region, which means that so far only the large, spectacular sites are well documented and understood.

So the archaeology of Southeast Asia is complex, and the understanding and interpretation of the archaeology of the region is still evolving. The fluid nature of current understanding is made clear by the 'Key controversy' box 'The origins of Southeast Asian Indianized states' on p.584 of *HP*, which emphasises the relationship between Indian states and indigenous states in Southeast Asia. The clearest indication of this is the spread of Buddhism and Hinduism, yet there is also significant contact with imperial China – through trade at least – and much of the history of the area seems to derive from Chinese sources. A key feature in the cultural development of this region during the first millennium AD seems to be interaction between indigenous states and their neighbours to the north and west.

In the next section you will return to Mesoamerica, concluding your study of the Maya, which you began in Week 7, and moving on to study the Aztecs.

Mesoamerica

You have already studied a series of complex societies in Mesoamerica but, from the fourteenth century AD onwards, the archaeological evidence is enhanced by historical sources. These sources are both indigenous and external; the latter written by the Spanish who encountered Mesoamerican societies at the start of the sixteenth century AD.

Exercise

Now read the last two sections of Chapter 16 of *HP*: 'Mesoamerica discovered' and 'Summary and conclusions', including material in boxes (pp.633–9). This final part of the chapter describes the more recent Maya societies and the Aztec empire. As you read, note down the key features of the Aztec empire.

Discussion

The Aztec empire and its neighbours were highly organised, hierarchical and warlike. These features seem to be a prerequisite to the rapid formation of the empire through conquest or military alliance that was held together by force, taxation and tribute, to the evident benefit of the elite of the empire. The Aztec capital at Tenochtitlán was clearly a very sophisticated city and the central focus of the empire. However, the empire proved fragile and did not long survive the arrival of aggressive European incomers who effectively disrupted the top level of the social hierarchy and so broke the coercive forces that held the empire together. Your notes will be useful later in the block when you compare empires in different parts of the world.

If you want to find out more about the Aztecs, further sections of *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* provide greater detail than *HP*; there are also some internet resources available from the course website. Towards the end of the block you will learn more about the Aztecs on the audio CD.

South America

The remainder of this week's study concentrates on the cultures of South America outside Amazonia. Your reading starts with the geographical context and then goes on to cover the Andean and Pacific coastal societies between about 3000 BC and AD 1500. This chapter takes you back to the pre-farming stage and gives you the opportunity to study a long sequence of cultural development, from the adoption of farming and the first use of pottery all the way through to the flourishing of the Inca empire. Society in South America seems to have developed almost entirely independently of Mesoamerica, and, of course, the Old World. These circumstances set up the possibility of studying the cultural and social development of this region in comparison to other areas you have studied.

Exercise

First, read the first three sections of Chapter 17 of *HP*: 'Main environmental regions', 'Chronological overview' and 'Preceramic (prepottery) civilization in the Andes, c.3000–1800 BC', including material in boxes (pp.641–50). This will provide you with an overview of the geography and chronology of South America and cover the early development of societies in South America.

Discussion

The Andean Preceramic period seems to have some distinctive characteristics. A basically hunter-gatherer society – dependent on the sea and engaging with a limited range of plant crops – developed into a society that produced monuments for social or religious purposes. It is frustrating that so little is known about what actually happened at the mound monuments. Clearly there must have been a complex set of beliefs and presumably social activity and ritual associated with the mounds. Until new evidence is found, it can only be speculation that the mounds performed a similar function to later ceremonial structures.

Exercise

Now read the next two sections of Chapter 17 of *HP*: 'Civilization reconfigured', 'Andean confederacies and states in the Early Intermediate period, c.200 BC–AD 650', including material in boxes (pp.650–60). Note down any features of emergent states that you come across.

Discussion

The development of the Andean cultures is presented as continually increasing in complexity and sophistication. The monuments become much more sophisticated and a hierarchical class structure emerges. *HP* does not

discuss in detail the origins of cities in South America. The earlier plaza and mound complexes at Sechín Alto and Chavín de Huántar seem to be largely ceremonial centres. Later, the mounds and plazas of the 'Temple of the Sun' and the 'Temple of the Moon' in the Moche Valley are part of a larger settlement that certainly seems to have many of the attributes of a city, and Moche is described as a state (*HP*, pp.655–9). It may well be the case that the architectural origins of the largest structures in the city lie in the earlier mound and plaza structures; however, *HP* does not discuss this possibility, and further reading would be needed to investigate the question. A striking feature of the period is the emergence of distinctive styles of art – you can see the change by just flicking through the illustrations between pages 646 and 660 of *HP*. Just as striking is how the availability of these pictorial representations transforms the possibilities for making social interpretations of the archaeology. For example, the 'presentation theme' scenes provide a visual representation of ceremonies that may have taken place in the temples or plazas.

Exercise

Although *HP* is well illustrated, it only shows a limited number of artefacts from any single culture. The internet provides access to more images than a single book can contain, but, as with searching for words, searching for images is not always straightforward. The OU Library provides access to some specialised image libraries. Go to Week 10 on the course website, then 'Bridgeman Education'. Find the search box on the Bridgeman Education homepage, type in 'moche' (lower case will work) and then click on 'Search' or press the 'enter' key. The results you receive should present nearly 40 images that have been indexed under 'moche'. Clicking on an image will bring up a larger version, together with a brief description and details about the image and the object. Explore several images. What do you think are the most striking characteristics of Moche art?

Discussion

The ceramic vessels are most memorable. They are a striking combination of naturalistic (almost life-like) elements (the faces for example) and stylised geometric forms and patterns. Those in the form of human heads are particularly characteristic, and are often taken to represent members of the *kuraka* elite, as if they were portraits. There is, however, no evidential support for this supposition, even if the vases appear to have been modelled from life. You can read more about Moche ceramics, if you would like to, by going to the course website and searching *Grove Art Online*, an extensive dictionary of art, for 'moche ceramic'. Image libraries contain only images that have been pre-selected and these usually have other information associated with them. Search engines such as Google also allow you to search for images, however these are not pre-selected or quality controlled. Searching for images of 'moche' with Google gives unpredictable results: 'moche' is French slang for 'ugly'! Ultimately, you might find more images indexed under 'moche' using Google – when I searched, over 200,000 were listed, but the images are not necessarily accompanied by reliable captions or information about the origins

of either the image or artefact. By using a specialised image library you will find fewer images, but they will be of higher quality.

Exercise

Now read the next section of Chapter 17 of *HP* – ‘The rise and fall of the Andean empires’, including material in boxes (pp.660–7) – and then skip to the final section – ‘Summary and conclusions’ (p.677). This completes your reading about Andean archaeology.

Discussion

The succession of spectacular empires in the Andean region is difficult to match elsewhere in the world. Although the reading does hint at some cultural continuity – and hierarchical social structures seem to persist – the overall impression is one of volatility, with rapid rises and crashing falls. Part of this seems to relate to the environmental fragility of the region: rainfall is variable or unreliable, making communities established in river valleys surrounded by desert, and dependent on irrigation to produce food, vulnerable to environmental changes. But perhaps there is also a fragility inherent in political systems that are dependent on dominant dynasties, such as the *kuraka* lineages of the Incas, and held together largely by coercion. These are the kinds of topic that could be pursued through further reading (see *HP*, p.677, for some suggestions). Nevertheless, the collapse of the Inca empire, like that of the Aztecs, seems to have two clear causes: disease brought from the Old World and the violent encounter between the indigenous and the colonial powers, not unlike, but on a different scale to, the colonial encounter in Australia that you studied in Week 2 (*HP*, Chapter 8, pp.274–5).

You have now studied a range of different empires in different parts of the world and at different times. Already, common themes are emerging in different empires. Empires grow from strong states, are usually created by dominant elites or even strong individuals and are held together by coercion and taxation. The collapse of the empires may be triggered by environmental changes or a failure in the political structures that bind the various provinces of an empire together, possibly caused by contact with other forces that disrupt the existing coercive forces. In the New World, collapse was precipitated by contact with Europeans, particularly the attack on the indigenous elites; infections brought from the Old World also played a significant part.

Next week you will study two further societies where empires emerged – Greece and Rome.

Week 11 Mediterranean empires

In Week 11 you will be using *The Human Past (HP)*, the audio CD and the internet.

Greece and Rome

In Week 6 you read about the Mediterranean region (*HP*, Chapter 13, pp.473–6) in the Study Guide section ‘The Mediterranean Bronze Age’. *HP* makes the point that the Mediterranean Sea enabled intense interaction between the peoples who occupy its shores: if anything, the sea connected rather than divided societies. A second point is that the region is diverse in its geography and climate. These points are both true, but they are not unique to the Mediterranean. South America, for example, has a very diverse landscape and climate. The question of how the Mediterranean region can be defined is an interesting one. Climate can be used – sunshine, rainfall or frost-free days, for example; or plant distributions – olives and vines thrive around the shores of the Mediterranean. Moving away from the sea, the change in the environment is typically gradual, although in some areas there is rapid transition to desert or mountain conditions. Apparent barriers, such as the Alps to the north, also function as communication routes, with alpine passes facilitating north–south exchange with temperate Europe. Another reason to suggest that the Mediterranean region is somehow special is because Western culture can trace some of its origins back to the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean – Greece and Rome. This has led to some degree of ethnocentrism, where the Western intellectual tradition has privileged Classical archaeology (i.e. the archaeology of Greece and Rome) over the study of the archaeology of other regions of the world. This point of view will make little sense if, for example, you happen to be of Chinese origin and are studying the course in Thailand. However, one result of these circumstances is that the archaeology of the Mediterranean region has been intensively studied, particularly for the first millennia BC and AD, and so it is possible to write a more detailed account of the archaeology in this area than in other parts of the world.

You have already read the Bronze Age episode of the development of Mediterranean cultures. We will now pick up the story at the close of the second millennium BC. Although the Greeks and Romans tend to get most attention, there were also other peoples who contributed to the cultural development of the Mediterranean in the first millennium BC.

Exercise

Now read the section of Chapter 13 of *HP* entitled ‘Cultural variety in the first millennium BC’ (pp.486–99). As you read, try to identify and note down any unique features of Mediterranean societies that you cannot immediately think of as paralleled in any other of the state or imperial societies that you have so far studied. Focus on the big picture: think about social structures and processes rather than details of individuals or sites.

Discussion

I think it is quite difficult to identify anything that is truly unique. Urbanisation and cultural diversity are already familiar. Perhaps the polis – looked at in detail – is unique, but a society organised into city-based political units is not. Wars between states are a recurrent feature in world archaeology. Colonies seem to be a feature of the Greek world, but you have come across the

deliberate creation of settlements for strategic purposes in both China and Mesoamerica. The quest for raw materials and trade in commodities are also familiar, as are the emergence of distinctive art styles. Society may have been distinctive, with the notion of citizenship and democracy, but it was still very hierarchical, like many others, with a slave class at its base. The detailed manifestations of Greek culture, such as art, philosophy and drama, are certainly unique, and they are still influential in the modern world. However, considered at the world scale, in their time, they were simply manifestations of local diversity within a social structure, and as such can be compared to manifestations of diversity in other state-level societies elsewhere in the world at various times. This comparison does not seek to devalue Greek culture or to ignore its original and unique features, it just illustrates that, at a general level, Greek culture belongs within a range of social, cultural and environmental adaptations that can be established through making global comparisons.

Although the societies you have just read about all seem to fit within the definition of a state, you may have noticed on p.487 that reference is made to Athens as an imperial power, and on p.496 to an 'Athenian empire'. *HP* does not provide much detail, but it indicates that Athens extracted tribute from subject states for a short period. This can be interpreted as evidence for an empire, but it was short-lived and there is little evidence for the other archaeological indicators of empires that you have already encountered. Even if the claims for an Athenian empire are tenuous, there does seem to have been a strong sense of identity or ethnicity shared by the Greeks (outlined in *HP*, p.499).

At the start of this block, one of the key features of an empire that is listed is: 'some degree of political or economic unification but with cultural and ethnic diversity'. So far, you have studied many different cultures and ethnic groups but have not systematically studied the question of just what an ethnic group might be. I have just suggested that Greeks had a shared ethnicity; this would therefore make the Greeks an ethnic group. The features of the Greeks discussed on p.499 of *HP* align with the anthropological description of an ethnic group as 'defined by a set of features or dimensions ... a collective name; a common myth of descent; a shared history; a distinctive shared culture; an association with a specific territory; and a sense of solidarity' (Banks, 1996, p.130). Finding archaeological evidence for these features of an ethnic group can be challenging in societies that are less well known and researched than the Greeks. Returning to the expectation that an empire should be unified and contain ethnic diversity, it should be possible to detect different ethnic groups within an empire.

Exercise

Now read the final three sections of Chapter 13 of *HP*: 'Growing powers, growing territories', 'A Mediterranean empire' and 'Summary and conclusions', including material in boxes (pp.500–17). This starts with the empire of Alexander the Great and ends with the 'fall' of the Roman empire. As you read, note down the features of empires that you can observe, and in addition

note any evidence for, or discussion of, ethnic groups within the Roman empire. The notes will be useful in your TMA preparation.

Discussion

Many features of the Roman empire should by now appear to be typical attributes of archaeological empires: conquest by war, defence of frontiers and conquest of neighbours, personal ambition of members of the elite, control and taxation of provinces, wide territorial extent, a degree of cultural uniformity and internal trade are all familiar. Possibly more unique to the Roman empire is the extent of the development of the imperial metropolis at Rome, its size and density, and the detail of what is known about its structures and organisation. Also, because archaeological research has been more intensive in the Mediterranean than in other parts of the world, more is known about the internal organisation and economic relationships within the empire and the relationships between the Roman state and conquered peoples and provinces.

There are many references in the chapter to ethnic groups: Etruscans, Carthaginians, Greeks, Gauls and so on. These are usually mentioned as they were conquered and annexed to the Roman empire. However, the chapter also makes it apparent that these various peoples did not remain as isolated, separate ethnic groups within the empire, rather there was cultural exchange between the Roman imperial power and the peoples of the states it absorbed. The most obvious example of this is the Greeks, but it is true of most of the peoples of the Roman empire.

Comparing empires

You have now studied a range of empires from around the world and a number of similarities should be apparent. The notes you have been making throughout the block will have picked out the recurrent features of empires. The final track of the audio CD revises some of the characteristics of empires and begins to directly compare different empires.

Exercise

Listen now to Track 4 of the audio CD. The audio contains a discussion with Chris Scarre on the nature of empires and experts discussing the Aztec and Roman empires, along with a discussion of why Maya society was not an empire.

Discussion

Comparing empires is possible because, as you have heard, there are recurrent features that characterise empires, and these can be sought out in each of the empires you have studied.

All the key features of empires can be investigated and compared in each of the empires you have studied. The key features, as listed at the beginning of the block, are:

- the domination of states and peoples by another state or people
- this domination usually extends over a wide geographical area
- the development of a system of political control or government (perhaps with provinces or subject-kings)
- a bureaucracy empowered by writing
- some degree of political or economic unification, but with cultural and ethnic diversity.

You could extract from your notes examples of each of these for all of the empires you have studied. Yet, despite these recurrent features, there is still a great variety within ancient empires. For example, the technological sophistication varied greatly: New World empires were essentially Neolithic in their technology, whereas the Chinese and Roman empires were technologically Iron Age, but they all had social systems that can be identified as empires. Empires also seem to be very subject to change. Perhaps, by their very nature, as they grow by conquest of neighbouring states, they encounter and interact with other societies and this creates constant social and cultural change. Long-lived empires, such as the Roman or Chinese, were never static but constantly adapted to new conditions and external threats and opportunities.

Week 12 Study week

This week you will work on your third TMA. Full details are given in the Assessment Booklet.

References

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Block 4 Debates and diasporas

In this block you will be taking a slightly different approach. So far you have studied some of the important themes of archaeology: the origins of agriculture, cities, states and empires. In this block you will extend your study beyond *HP*, looking more closely at some of the archaeological evidence used to build arguments, and at some current debates. *HP* presents a synthesis of archaeological research and evidence, and only occasionally delves deeply into the debates and detailed evidence that lie behind its synthetic account. In Block 4 you will be digging deeper, exploring archaeological evidence and its interpretation. This will lead you to investigate how evidence can be interpreted and understand how archaeological understanding can be developed through debates about conflicting interpretations. This deeper digging and going beyond *HP* will prepare you for researching your ECA topic. You will be doing this as you study three topics: prehistoric rock art; colonisation of the Pacific islands and the Austronesian diaspora; and the African diaspora. Diaspora is used in this block in its general sense of the dispersal of a people from their place of origin to new areas.

Week 13 Investigating rock art

In Week 13 you will be using *The Human Past* (*HP*) and the internet.

This week you will study a particular form of archaeological evidence that is widely distributed throughout the world: rock art. You will study the archaeological evidence itself and you will consider how it may be interpreted. Rock art is discussed at various points in *HP* and you have already read about it in Australia (*HP*, pp.271–3), but it is not discussed in a sustained way. For this reason, much of this week's work will use online resources available on the course website, both text and pictures. First, some definitions: what is rock art?

Exercise

Go online and read the 'Introduction' to the article on rock art in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*: there is a link on the course website. You can look up the meaning of terms that may be unfamiliar to you, such as 'shamanism', by searching *Oxford Reference Online* as you read and then going back to the article.

Discussion

The introduction usefully defines and describes rock art, and goes on to discuss some of the various ways in which it may be interpreted.

Exercise

Before going any further, it would be best to look at some examples of rock art. Go to the course website, find Block 4, Week 13, and visit the Rock Art Gallery. Here there are some selected views of rock art from the Valcamonica in the Italian Alps. Looking at these images will introduce you to some of the basic features of engraved rock art. View the images now, in the order in which they are presented, and read the captions that introduce some of the basic features of engraved rock art. As you view the images, try to identify what the rock art is representing, and categorise each petroglyph according to the categories identified in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*: zoomorphs (animals and birds), anthropomorphs (human or humanlike figures), objects (such as tools or weapons) and nonfigurative or abstract designs. Some petroglyphs may fall into more than one category if they have been combined with or superimposed upon older rock art.

Discussion

The images fall within the categories described in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*, although the category of 'object' needs to be stretched to include the houses and buildings. The engravings have a simple and engaging style, and they may be considered aesthetically pleasing; this is why they have sometimes simply been interpreted as art.

Zoomorphs, often combined with anthropomorphs, are extremely common in rock art around the world. This combination has encouraged interpretations of rock art as being connected with some form of hunting magic. The example in the Rock Art Gallery, with dogs attacking a stag, would seem to be an unproblematic representation of a hunting scene. Images such as this, or ploughing scenes for example, seem to show representations of an activity or event, but do not seem to tell a story. Apart from the abstract designs, all the images from the Valcamonica you have seen represent real-world objects, and so provide an opportunity to interpret the engravings as attempts to represent the world of the people who made them. This is a tempting interpretation, particularly when houses or granaries are represented, and some of the abstract signs are interpreted as maps of fields. There are some further selected links to other websites containing rock art from the area in the Valcamonica section of the Rock Art Gallery.

Exercise

Now read the article on Alpine rock art in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. How does the article interpret the engravings?

Discussion

There is actually very little interpretation in the article. It largely describes the art as representing real-world objects, although it does hint that it is not known what some of the symbols stood for. Depictions of wagons are noted as the earliest examples of wheeled transport, the representation of the plough and the ox are taken to indicate their importance in rural life, and the possible

maps are mentioned. Generally, though, the engravings are interpreted in a straightforward way as depicting everyday real-world objects.

Exercise

However, not all of the images are quite so clearly representing the real world as the *Oxford Companion* suggests. Turn to Chapter 11 of *HP* and read the 'Key controversy' box 'Rock art – representation of myth or reality?' (pp.426–7). What possible other-worldly interpretations are suggested here?

Discussion

This 'Key controversy' box also considers that the art represents real-world objects, and focuses on the fact that, in many cases, the stone surface was used over and over again, with new engravings partially obliterating older ones. This feature is useful in working out a relative chronology and placing the engravings in a sequence through time. Yet it also raises questions about the purpose and function of the engravings. Someone engraving a stone could evidently ignore any previous engravings, if they so wished, but on other occasions engravings from different periods do respect each other and not overwrite earlier engravings. This suggests that the earlier engravings did sometimes have some meaning for those making later engravings. The 'Key controversy' box also suggests that some of the images may have had a symbolic or religious function, particularly unreal scenes of figures with headdresses of horns or sun-like rays, which may have represented a Celtic deity or a sun cult; some less cautious authors have suggested that a sun god might be represented. The section of the 'Key controversy' box on Scandinavian rock art suggests that the art is probably ritual or mythological, and even suggests associations with the supernatural.

This form of ritual, mythological or supernatural interpretation immediately raises two issues:

- 1 Is it appropriate to talk of cults and deities in attempting to interpret 'difficult' scenes?
- 2 Is it appropriate to consider rock art as art, or even more specifically as religious art?

In approaching the first issue, it is worth noting that there is a tendency in archaeological interpretation, when it is practised as a rational and scientific pursuit, to account for the 'inexplicable' as an aspect of ritual, religious or symbolic behaviour. An artefact or image that cannot be explained as utilitarian is quite often explained as a ritual object. This easy explanation assumes that the modern archaeologist is somehow omniscient, and, if a function or purpose is not self-evident, then there must have been some supernatural or irrational explanation or purpose. A way of examining the first issue is to consider the context of the archaeological object. Context is always important in archaeology and it includes both the specific (where an object was found and what was found alongside it) and also the more general (which people, society or culture made the object, and when).

You have read something of the physical context of the engravings in a southern Alpine valley in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* and *HP*, and you have seen, in the Rock Art Gallery, how the rocks upon which the engravings are made fit in to the landscape of the valley. The following exercise will enable you to explore the general Bronze Age cultural context.

Exercise

Now read the section in Chapter 11 of *HP* entitled 'Later prehistoric societies in Central and Western Europe' (pp.420–4). As you read, note down any items that are mentioned that you have seen in the rock art, and note down any examples of symbolic behaviour that are discussed.

Discussion

Although this section of *HP* does not mention Valcamonica, specific objects mentioned in the text that can be seen in the rock art include: daggers, warriors (with and without bows), axes, halberds, wheeled vehicles, houses, buildings on stilts, farm buildings, goats, dogs and fields, and the 'sky-disk' and 'sun chariot' may be related to the sun-cult activity depicted (but note that the significance of the 'Nebra sky-disk' is debated). The range of items discussed, derived from settlements, burials and hoards, is therefore compatible with the items represented in the rock art. The symbolic behaviour mentioned is principally: burial practices, the use of metalwork to display prestige and cult practices. How does this relate to the rock art? In the rock art there are no obvious scenes of burials, no obviously dead humans represented, even though they are depicted apparently fighting, so this suggests that the engravings do not represent the full range of Bronze Age activity. Although the images may be from the real world, the range of the activities they depict is limited to activities such as hunting, fighting, brandishing weapons, dancing, horse-riding, occasionally weaving, ploughing, hoeing, wagon driving and the cult activities. Items of metalwork appear frequently, often separately from human figures and often in groups of repeated items. This would seem to be consistent with their symbolic use to indicate prestige or status. The rare scenes of undetermined, possibly cultic, activity are generally identified by the presence of individuals in unusual costumes or the presence of a rayed-disk representing the sun, and is possibly paralleled in the bronze and gold artefacts illustrated in *HP*.

Now let us turn to the second issue: is it appropriate to consider rock art as art, or, more specifically, as religious art?

Exercise

Read the discussion of 'Art' in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. Does this discussion help you come to a conclusion on this question?

Discussion

Although the term 'art' is freely used in archaeology, as in the term 'rock art', *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* is very sceptical about its usefulness. It also expresses uncertainty as to how art can be used in archaeological

interpretation, saying on the one hand that 'We cannot read ancient art in the same way as its intended public' and 'we can use art only as a source of hypotheses', and on the other hand that it is 'art alone that gives humankind its true dimension, by showing that human activities hold meanings'. Put another way, the 'art' demonstrates that the groups of humans who produced it were capable of complex cognitive and symbolic behaviour that we cannot now be sure of understanding. So the study of art in archaeology is both frustrating and essential! Nowhere is this more apparent than in the study of rock art – it appears to show so much of past lives, but what can it actually tell us? One potential route to crack this problem is to consider any ethnographic evidence for the meaning of rock art.

Exercise

First read the article 'Rock art of Southern Africa' in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. Then turn to Chapter 10 of *HP* and read the subsection 'Southern and Central Africa' (pp.355–6) and the 'Key controversy' box 'Symbolism in Southern African rock art' (pp.358–9). How does the evidence from ethnographic studies add to the understanding of rock art? (You will also find some links to images of South African rock art in the Rock Art Gallery on the course website.)

Discussion

These discussions suggest that, at the very least, the use of ethnographic evidence indicates that the rock art from Southern Africa had a symbolic meaning for the people who produced it. It is therefore not simply art for art's sake. The paintings representing eland and shamanistic activity are said to serve as a link between the material and the spirit world (the rock face upon which the paint is applied is conceived of as the barrier between the two worlds). These paintings therefore represent the spirit world and depict shamans – powerful individuals in such societies – at work. This helps to interpret what is depicted, but it doesn't really help to explain why individuals and societies chose to represent these scenes and items on the rock. Perhaps they identify specific points of contact between the material and the spiritual worlds, or perhaps they serve as a constant reminder of the power and role of the shaman in the society and act as a reservoir of shamanistic power. But here we are wandering off into the realm of speculation. Added to this are the difficulties extending the shamanistic element of the explanation of rock art back into the more remote past and to other unrelated regions of the world.

The shamanistic role of rock art has become a popular explanation for rock art across the globe in recent years. Researchers have accepted that rock art had a spiritual component: the Valcamonica figure of a running long-haired figure is now often identified as a shaman (you can find this image in the Valcamonica section of the Rock Art Gallery). The shamanistic explanation is also popular in North America, where indigenous traditions of shamanism have been associated with rock art.

Exercise

Go online and read the section 'North American rock art' in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*. As you read, note down the explanations that are suggested for rock art. If you would like to see some examples of the rock art, there are links to some images in the North American section of the Rock Art Gallery.

Discussion

Although the shamanistic explanation is favoured in North America, it is also accepted that rock art has many other functions, and that one single explanation cannot account for all instances of rock art. A pluralistic view such as this is attractive because not all rock art seems to be obviously related to cultic, religious or spiritual behaviour.

Up to now we have considered rock art in a number of particular ways: as images of real-world objects, as images of unreal objects, and as part of a belief system mediating between the material and the spirit worlds. The reading on North America also emphasised that rock art can perform a role in communication, as a territorial marker. Rock art may also act as a way-marker, showing routes to mobile societies or traders. Other possible explanations that have been suggested include: depictions of astronomical phenomena, records of events or exploits and by-products of ritual behaviour (Ross, 2001, p.545). Thus far, attempts to understand rock art have been either rooted in a formal characterisation of what the art represents, derived from an informed understanding with some kind of inside information provided by ethnography (although on investigation much seems vague and not contemporary with the rock art) or based upon an analogy with the understanding of rock art derived from elsewhere (Chippindale and Taçon, 1998). What seem extremely rare are ethnographic accounts that may be directly associated with surviving rock art. An exception is a recent study of rock art from the Grand Canyon in the USA. In order to interpret the surviving rock art at a particular site in Kanab Creek, the authors combined a number of approaches: a formal archaeological analysis of the pictographs; ethnographic interviews with native Paiute consultants who still live in the area and retain an oral history; examination of more general knowledge of the ethnography of the Paiute people; and contemporary archaeological theory (Stoffle *et al.*, 2000). In effect, the authors combine contemporary academic approaches to rock art with the views of the Paiute people who created the rock art at the end of the nineteenth century AD. The whole article is available on the internet (there is a link on the course website), but it is written in a rather daunting anthropological style. For the present it will be sufficient to view the pictographs in the Rock Art Gallery and read some extracts from the article.

Exercise

Go online and view the Kanab Creek rock art in the Rock Art Gallery. The lower part of Figure 6 shows a general view, and the upper part shows a detail of the right end of the panel; Figure 7 shows a detail of the left end.

Classify the visible pictographs as either zoomorphs, anthropomorphs, objects, or nonfigurative/abstract designs.

Discussion

Most of the pictographs appear to be anthropomorphs, with one inverted zoomorph and various abstract designs. As such, they can be seen to fit with the general, worldwide categories of rock art. Yet the Paiute have very specific interpretations of them.

Exercise

Read the following extract from Stoffle *et al.* (2000), which provides an archaeological description and a Paiute interpretation of the rock art. As you read, pay attention to the contrast between the archaeological description of the rock art that comes first, and the comments of the Paiute about the art.

The panel identified by Kaibab Paiute individuals in 1976 as associated with a Ghost Dance ceremony is a prominent series of paintings in a bright white, mostly human forms with rounded shoulders and torsos. Moving from right to left (figs. 6 and 7), the panel begins with a figure that on first glance resembles a spiral but upon closer inspection is a circle around a central dot; around this is an enclosed crescent moon with a line extending from the bottom of the crescent. Below this figure is a white smear. Above and to the left is a headless figure. Two conspicuous figures in the panel, one human-like and the other a quadruped (probably a horse), are depicted with their feet pointing upward. To the left of them is a long object with an oval head that appears to be a rattle. Above this set of figures are six flying figures. To the left of the rattle-like object are stick figures that appear to be wearing clothing (represented by a double outline of the arms, legs, and body). Next to these are more stick figures with white paint smeared over them like a veil. To the left of these are three-toed stick figures (one with a triangular body), a geometric design, and two more stick figures. Small white lines appear above these figures. These figures are connected with the next set of figures by a 3-ft.-long angled line. Two of the next three figures have no heads, and two have grids of dots over their heads. The remainder of the panel contains two distinct animals, headless figures, and smears. The flying figures of this panel are very similar to those depicted on the ceiling over a rock art panel at a site in Whitmore Wash, farther down the Grand Canyon, which has also been interpreted by two knowledgeable Southern Paiute consultants as a Ghost Dance site (Stoffle *et al.* 1994: 165–166; Stoffle *et al.* 1995: 115). Thus there appears to be a direct cultural relationship between these sites.

The white paint panel was seen by the Southern Paiute consultants as directly linked to Indian residence across and up the canyon: “People were living in this area when these paintings were made.” The panel is believed to be related to the white paint pigment source that is found below the panel and just beyond it along the base of the cliff (see fig. 8).

The consultants agreed that the panel was a record of events and things seen, "part of our life." They considered the site a place where Paiute people would come and make offerings, offer prayers to spiritual beings, and record events:

This is a good record of events, a part of history that took place including ceremonies. The whole panel is connected.

It is a record of traditional beliefs, where they conduct ceremonies.

It is all of the above, teaches children, translates traditions from one people to another, shows trails, happiness and tragedies.

History is written here. For example, the headless people are about Paiutes that were killed by the white people.

One middle-aged Paiute woman said that she had visited this panel when she was growing up, but her parents had not told her its meaning; rather, they had given her lessons about life in general. All the consultants believed that the white paint panel was made by Paiutes. One person said, "This is an overwhelming experience to see these are still here and that I can come down here to view it and touch the white paint source."

The pigment from the seam along the base of the sandstone cliff had the consistency of cornstarch and would have needed very little grinding to prepare it for making paint. At one point the pigment is more than a meter thick and many meters high. The seam shows the scars of extensive quarrying. In connection with the Ghost Dance, it is important to reiterate that the pictographs at the site are in white and white clothing was worn by Hualapai Ghost Dancers. According to an eyewitness to a Ghost Dance (possibly the third Grass Springs ceremony) held in 1891 near Kingman, Arizona (Miller 1952: 33–34, quoted in Dobyns and Euler 1967: 5),

As darkness began to fall, the every-day flashy, though scant clothing was exchanged for the white robes prescribed by the medicine men as a dancing costume; faces and hair were painted white. ... A favorite mode of painting seemed to be to paint the lips, eyes, nose and hair white, leaving the rest of the face its natural color.

Although other descriptions suggest red face paint, if one were trying to depict Ghost Dancers in costumes white would be the most appropriate color.

(Stoffle *et al.*, 2000, pp.18–21)

Discussion

The words of the Paiute do not try to describe the paintings (perhaps they were not asked to do this), but they make some comments that are familiar from the earlier discussion of rock art – they say that it is a record of events or part of history. The depiction of events has been noted in the Valcamonica, but the Paiute also add that the paintings are ‘part of our life’, as if they are directly connecting with the history. They are not seeing the evidence of the past as separate from themselves, it is a part of their present consciousness – they do not identify the art as archaeological remains that are remote and from the past. Other ideas that the Paiute express have not been encountered in the archaeological interpretations of rock art that you have read – no suggestion has been made that rock art taught later generations or that it conveyed emotions, as the Paiute suggest. Although the panel is a record, it has no apparent narrative, to outsiders’ eyes at least. The striking description that ‘The whole panel is connected’, suggests that the individual figures are all part of an interconnected whole, and it is the entire ensemble that should be considered and not just the individual figures that make it up. The comment could also be interpreted more generally as meaning that the pictographs are connected to their contemporary life. The panel is also connected with a specific occasion when the Ghost Dance took place, and in some way commemorates and preserves the event.

The Paiute clearly have an intimate and emotional response to the rock art, very different from the analytical and detached archaeological approach. A further extract makes Paiute attitudes to their rock art explicit.

For Paiute people, rock art sites elicit behavioral proscriptions. Many Paiute people believe that no Indian person would casually mark a rock, because all rocks are alive and powerful. Also, to mark a rock is to place a human desire on the rock’s desire. It is much like picking a plant without its permission. It would not be done without a clear-cut and culturally acceptable reason that the rock understood and accepted. Most Paiute people would not deliberately anger a powerful rock, and therefore it is understood that any marks on a rock, whether pecked or painted, were made within the bounds of culturally appropriate behavior.

The act of painting or pecking a boulder or cliff face involves additional interaction obligations between the Paiute person and the pecking rock or the painting pigment. Cobble-sized stones receive special attention. Such stones often talk to an Indian person in order to attract attention. Sometimes the Indian person listens to this message and moves the cobble to a place that is agreeable to it and the person. Some cobbles are used in curing and are highly valued possessions, but each cobble has selected the person to cure as much as being selected by that person. Picking up a cobble to peck a boulder or cliff face involves two-way communication. Similarly, painting a rock involves acquiring the pigment at a quarry, and pigment sources are often approached with caution because of their perceived power. Pigment can be quarried only

after it has been told the reason it is being disturbed, and it will serve the Paiute person only if it agrees to be so used. The making of paint further requires the use of animal fat, which involves additional Paiute-animal behavioral proscriptions.

No Paiute person today knows with certainty who made all rock paintings and peckings, but the Paiute consultants interviewed assert that they are likely to have been made by persons with religious knowledge and purpose. According to the consultants, when medicine and religious persons make rock paintings they do so for themselves, their fellow community members, and Paiute people in general. The act of painting or pecking a rock may be for good, for evil, or for both. Culturally inappropriate actions need to be balanced by appropriate actions so that sickness will abate or misfortune will reverse. When medicine and religious persons paint and peck rocks, they leave the location with added power generated by the ceremony (see Carmichael 1994, Mohs 1994, Theodoratus and LaPena 1994). A person stepping into ceremonial power associated with an already powerful place risks becoming involved in the rock art ceremony itself. Thus, rock painting and pecking sites are believed to be associated with personal danger that does not exist elsewhere.

(Stoffle *et al.*, 2000, p.22)

This extract highlights the animistic beliefs of the Paiute: the belief that the rest of the world is alive in the same way as they are. The notion that a Paiute is using a living thing to make an engraved image on another living thing certainly brings a different perspective to viewing prehistoric rock art. The idea that the creation of images creates power within the community, and that rock art sites possess power, also raises questions about the role of rock art in other communities. However, before getting too carried away, these are the beliefs of the Paiute, a modern people in the Southwestern USA; they have no direct relevance to understanding the prehistoric rock art of the Valcamonica. What they can do is act as an analogy: the people of the Valcamonica could have had feelings about their rock art similar to those of the Paiute, and that these are the kinds of belief people do have about rock art. This suggests that any simplistic or reductive 'reading' of rock art is likely to provide only a very superficial understanding of the rock art, the people who produced it and its role in their society.

In this week's work you have studied a difficult and controversial area of world archaeology. In the conclusion to the block you will return to some of the issues raised by this study, particularly who the rock art belongs to, and who gets to interpret it. Now, you will move to the Pacific Ocean and study an archaeological controversy about how it was colonised by human societies.

Week 14 Pacific colonisation and the Austronesian diaspora

In Week 14 you will be using *The Human Past* (HP) and the internet.

The islands of the Pacific Ocean were the last areas of the globe, apart from Antarctica, to be occupied by humans. The study of how the area was colonised, who did it and when it was done presents archaeology with an intriguing set of challenges. To begin with, let's start with the sections of *HP* that concern the Pacific.

Exercise

Read the last four sections of Chapter 8 of *HP*: 'The Austronesian dispersal', 'The Austronesian world after colonization', 'Seaborne trade and the transformation of tribal society in Southeast Asia' and 'Summary and conclusions', including material in boxes (pp.279–305). The sections were written by Peter Bellwood, one of the leading archaeologists in the field. As you read, briefly note down (1) the major features of the 'story' and (2) the types of evidence Bellwood uses in writing his synthesis.

Discussion

It is a fantastic story of human endeavour and adaptation, and it ties together various threads of archaeological evidence. A people, the Austronesians, who may be identified by shared elements of language and culture, were enabled by the development of agriculture to spread across the Pacific from island to island. At the same time, their society developed a social organisation that became a complex society and developed towards becoming a state. The story ties together several of the themes you have been studying. But is it true? Do you believe it? Is it really possible to identify a group of people whose long-term development can be traced from Taiwan across the Pacific? You probably did believe it – I certainly did when I first read it. It is, however, a controversial account.

So far we have been basing our studies largely on the syntheses provided in *HP*. You have been taught to be extremely careful and questioning in your use of information available on the internet. Now it is time to question what *HP* tells us. The study of the Austronesian diaspora has become quite a controversial area. Peter Bellwood has provided the synthesis you have just read and has written or edited several books on the subject. As I said, he is a leading authority on the subject. But he is not without his critics, and the debate is briefly referred to in the 'Key controversy' box 'The origins of the Austronesians' on pp.282–3 of *HP*.

Exercise

Quickly remind yourself of the controversy by reading the 'Key controversy' box 'The origins of the Austronesians' in Chapter 8 of *HP* (pp.282–3). Does Bellwood systematically refute his critics?

Discussion

Bellwood is actually pretty dismissive of his critics, and he doesn't go into much detail about why their viewpoint is 'not followed here'. He does, however, admit that 'details are still obscure'.

Other researchers have other ideas and new evidence that seriously challenges Bellwood's synthesis. Let's see what they have to say. The question was openly debated in 2004 in an issue of the journal *World Archaeology*, and we will be looking at the argument, considering how it has been conducted and what kinds of evidence have been employed. Essentially we will be studying the question of how (and whether) we understand something in archaeology. Knowledge and understanding, leading to the writing of a synthesis, develops through a process of questioning and debate – and it is this process that we will be studying.

Exercise

Read the provocative, very short, article 'Introduction: "Austronesia" and the great Austronesian migration' written by John Terrell (who has also written a book on the subject) to start the debate in *World Archaeology* (there is a link on the course website). What are the criticisms he has of Bellwood's explanation? Take brief notes.

Discussion

I would say that the criticisms levelled are largely theoretical. He is suggesting that the linguistic evidence is not as straightforward and clear-cut as it might seem, that agriculture may not be a cause of the Austronesian migration and that the Bellwood explanation is too simple. Terrell is not producing any evidence to subvert Bellwood, he is providing *theoretical objections* to Bellwood's explanation without – it must be said – providing an in-depth discussion of these objections.

Now let's move on to some of the evidence. The next article in *World Archaeology* was written by Stephen Oppenheimer, an authority on the history of human genetics. Ideally, you should read all of this article (there is a link to it on the course website). It is on the whole very accessible and relatively clearly written, but there are some more technical sections that require a background in human genetics to fully understand. Now, as I said, ideally you should read all the article, but because there are limits to the amount of reading you can do in this block, I am going to teach you a methodology for assessing this kind of article.

Journal articles often provide an abstract. This is usually a brief summary of the contents of the article written by the author. This is Oppenheimer's abstract.

Abstract

Renfrew's concept of an Indo-European expansion was carefully hedged with strict caveats to avoid earlier methodological and political pitfalls. His 'farming-language dispersal' hypothesis has inspired others to seek similar examples among other language families. This review argues that the model has gone awry in one of these, the 'Express Train from Taiwan to Polynesia' hypothesis. The persistence of the Austronesian language/rice-farming hypothesis results from a cluster of methodological errors that include an overall failure to heed Renfrew's caveats, over-reliance on a controversial putative linguistic homeland and failure to deal with parallel evidence impartially, resulting in unsupported claims of congruence.

(Oppenheimer, 2004, p.591)

So Oppenheimer tells us what the article will be about. He questions the 'farming-language dispersal' hypothesis (the linking of the spread of agriculture with the spread of languages) and criticises the 'Express Train from Taiwan to Polynesia' hypothesis (i.e. Bellwood's explanation, sometimes abbreviated to 'ETTP'), claiming it is the result of methodological errors. It is very apparent that Oppenheimer is about to attempt to demolish Bellwood's hypothesis. Let's skip to Oppenheimer's conclusions.

Conclusions

None of Diamond and Bellwood's five 'lines of evidence' confirms the ETTP hypothesis individually, let alone showing concordance. (1) Rooting the Austronesian language tree in Taiwan is still acknowledged to be controversial even by its adherents; (2) prehistoric rice agriculture has not been demonstrated in Wallacea or anywhere further east at the right dates, nor was it associated with red-slipped pottery; (3) the domesticates transported into the Pacific came from New Guinea, Wallacea and Southeast Asia, not China or Taiwan; (4) skeletal evidence has not demonstrated Neolithic replacement, and is ambivalent on local evolution in Southeast Asia vs. immigrant 'southern Mongoloids'; and (5) genetic evidence shows Southeast Asian intrusions into the Pacific, but no specific Polynesian roots in Taiwan. In contradiction to the 'Late Holocene Express Train', prolonged delay of these intrusive lines is likely in Wallacea and/or lowland New Guinea before the Late Holocene expansion to Polynesia.

Renfrew hedged the farming-language dispersal hypothesis with methodological caveats, partly due to historic mistakes made regarding the Indo-European story. But the most important caveat was that each of the multiple lines of evidence requires its own dating method if self-fulfilling assertions and circularity are to be avoided.

(Oppenheimer, 2004, p.598)

In this conclusion, Oppenheimer summarises what he has argued in the body of the article. Some unpacking of his jargon might help.

Wallacea = the central part of modern Indonesia between Java and Borneo on the west and New Guinea to the east.

Domesticates = domesticated plants and animals.

Neolithic replacement = replacement in the Neolithic period of indigenous people by 'southern Mongoloids' originating from Taiwan.

'Late Holocene Express Train' = 'Express Train from Taiwan to Polynesia' = 'ETTP'.

Intrusive lines = genetic lineages not originating in Wallacea.

Oppenheimer demonstrates that there are problems with the five arguments supporting Bellwood's explanation, suggesting that perhaps we shouldn't board the 'Express Train from Taiwan to Polynesia'. We have taken a short cut in only reading the abstract and conclusions of Oppenheimer's article. We should really read it all to understand why he undermines Bellwood's position, but here we are concentrating as much on the structure of the argument as the details of the cases made on either side. In the article, Oppenheimer only address the latter three points in detail. What he does is provide evidence from studies of language, physical anthropology and genetics that are not consistent, for various reasons, with the ETTP. In other words, he is providing evidence that is counter to the ETTP explanation.

The next in the sequence of articles to pick up the debate was written by Katherine Szabó and Sue O'Connor, who consider the relationship between the linguistic evidence and the archaeological evidence for the Lapita culture.

Exercise

Read the article by Szabó and O'Connor (there is a link to it on the course website). As you read, take note of the arguments they use to undermine Bellwood's explanation.

Discussion

Clearly Szabó and O'Connor believe that the linguistic evidence has been in the 'driving seat' for too long and they want to emphasise the variety in the archaeological evidence rather than turning the similarities in the archaeological evidence into monolithic archaeological 'cultures'. If the connection between language and archaeological culture were to be completely broken, Bellwood's explanation would be in trouble.

Also in 2004, and completely independently, a new and remarkable form of evidence was brought to bear on the argument by Lisa Matisoo-Smith and Judith Robins: the DNA of the Pacific rat (*Rattus exulans*). Here is their abstract.

Abstract

The human settlement of the Pacific in general, and the origin of the Polynesians in particular, have been topics of debate for over two centuries. Polynesian origins are most immediately traced to people who arrived in the Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa region $\approx 3,000$ B.P. and are clearly associated with the Lapita Cultural Complex. Although this scenario of the immediate origins of the Polynesians is generally accepted, the debate on the ultimate origin of the Polynesians and the Lapita cultural complex continues. Our previous research has shown that analyses of mtDNA variation in the Pacific rat (*Rattus exulans*), often transported as a food item in the colonising canoes, are valuable for tracing prehistoric human migration within Polynesia. Here we present mtDNA phylogenies based on ≈ 240 base pairs of the D-loop from both archaeological and modern samples collected from Island Southeast Asia and the Pacific. We identify three major haplogroups, two of which occur in the Pacific. Comparing our results with Lapita models of Oceanic settlement, we are able to reject two often cited but simplistic models, finding support instead for multifaceted models incorporating a more complex view of the Lapita intrusion. This study is unique and valuable in that *R. exulans* is the only organism associated with the Lapita dispersal for which there are sufficient ancient and extant populations available for genetic analysis. By tracking population changes through time, we can understand more fully the settlement process and population interactions in both Near and Remote Oceania.

(Matisoo-Smith and Robins, 2004, p.9167)

First of all some more unpacking of jargon is needed.

$\approx 3,000$ B.P. = about 3,000 before the present: the 'B.P.' indicates that the dates are uncalibrated radiocarbon dates and 'the present' is taken as the year 1950 (see *HP*, pp.33–4, 157).

mtDNA = mitochondrial DNA (see *HP*, p.138).

mtDNA phylogenies = genetic family trees.

≈ 240 base pairs of the D-loop = about 240 samples of associated chemical compounds found in DNA (base pairs) from a specific section of a DNA profile, the D-loop; the D-loop is useful in studies of evolution because it is liable to rapid mutation.

Haplogroups = groups of associated elements of a chromosome.

The patterns that can be observed in the evolution of the genes of the rats provide proxy evidence for the pattern of diffusion of human populations who transported the rats (which cannot swim) from island to island, either as stowaways or as a rapidly breeding food supply. The evidence is not directly available from studying ancient and modern humans, but because the rats are intimately associated with human settlement and they cannot move themselves from island to island without human help, the evidence from the rat DNA can be used as a proxy for studying the movement of the humans.

This assumes that the only way the rats ever moved was with humans. The rat genetics indicate that humans spread from Wallacea outwards, at the time of the Lapita culture. This evidence therefore puts the brakes on the 'Express Train from Taiwan to Polynesia'. The article is available online and there is a link to it on the course website; you can read it if you have time, or you are intrigued to find out all the details, but parts of it involve rather daunting discussion of quite complex and specialised genetics. However, the authors do, helpfully, conclude by systematically comparing their results with all the previously suggested explanations for human dispersal in the Pacific.

In 2005, Peter Bellwood and Jared Diamond wrote a reply to Oppenheimer's article, also in *World Archaeology*. Interestingly, they chose to defend their earlier work by pointing out that Oppenheimer had selectively quoted from it, and so misrepresented it, suggesting that they thought that 'Austronesians' had completely replaced the Neolithic peoples of the islands they colonised, rather than intermixed with the peoples. They did not take the opportunity to defend the 'Express Train from Taiwan to Polynesia'. I have summarised their reply, but there is a link to the full text of their short reply on the course website if you would like to read all the detail.

Also in 2005, *HP* was published, and Bellwood's contribution, which you have read, forms a part of the debate – an opportunity for him to lay out his synthesis in an authoritative textbook, counter his critics in the 'Key controversy' box 'The origins of the Austronesians' (*HP*, pp.282–3), and influence a generation of archaeology students with his point of view. We must assume that there was not time for Bellwood to include the new evidence for rat distribution published by Matisoo-Smith and Robins.

In the same year, Peter Bellwood published some new research of his own with Eusebio Dizon in the *Journal of Austronesian Studies* (Bellwood and Dizon, 2005). The 31-page article presents evidence from fieldwork indicating that the Batanes Islands, which lie just to the south of Taiwan, were colonised from Taiwan. So the Batanes Islands could have been the first stop of the ETTP, because similar pottery is found earlier on Taiwan and only later on the Batanes Islands, and this evidence for Taiwanese priority matches the linguistic evidence. The pottery they found has some similarities to Lapita pottery, and the dates he obtained from radiocarbon (carbon-14, or ^{14}C) dating are earlier than dates for the Lapita culture in Wallacea, suggesting that the evidence from Taiwan and the Batanes is more ancient than the evidence from Wallacea. All this is more support for the ETTP. Again, I am summarising their evidence and arguments; you can read the lengthy article online if you would like to and you have time (there is a link on the course website).

Without doubt, the Bellwood and Dizon article will not be the last word in the debate and new research will fuel either side of the argument, but the important thing is that as the argument progresses we gradually get to know and understand more and more about the Pacific diaspora. Bellwood has also written a controversial book, *The First Farmers*, which extends his ideas to the whole globe, suggesting that farming was spread around the world by groups of migrant farming people and their movements can be detected by the current world distribution of language groups (Bellwood, 2005).

So, should we believe Bellwood's explanation, the 'Express Train from Taiwan to Polynesia', as presented in *HP*? Well, you have seen and read that

there are some archaeologists and scientists who have produced evidence that seems to contradict parts of the ETTP hypothesis, and it has also been criticised on theoretical grounds and characterised as 'simplistic'. The ETTP is a synthetic account of a large-scale process – the human colonisation of the Pacific. It seeks to describe the 'bigger picture' rather than account for all the details of the process of colonisation. However, the ETTP hypothesis has stimulated other archaeologists and scientists to examine their own evidence, and seek for new forms of evidence that can challenge the ETTP. It may well turn out that dispersal from Wallacea becomes a more generally accepted account of how humans colonised the Pacific, but what is certain is that any new explanation to replace the ETTP will need to incorporate and explain a much wider range of evidence that the ETTP does. As our archaeological knowledge increases, we should demand better and better explanations of the past that are developed through rigorous debate and analysis of evidence. Neither Bellwood and associates nor Terrell and his supporters will win the argument about the colonisation. What will happen is that our understanding of the process of colonisation will gradually get better and better, and a hypothesis or explanation will gradually emerge that most archaeologists who have studied the issues – as you have – can accept as the best available account of how human societies occupied the Pacific.

Week 15 The African diaspora

In Week 15 you will be using *The Human Past* (HP) and the internet.

This week you will study a different diaspora – the African diaspora. In many ways this episode from the human past (and indeed present) is much more contentious and political than the Pacific diaspora. The African diaspora, in its broadest terms, is the dispersal of people of African descent from Africa to other parts of the world – particularly Europe, America and Southwest Asia. The process has been operating over much of the past 2,000 years in various ways, with different cultures and societies involved. Through much of this time, slavery has been the driving force behind the diaspora. The Roman empire drew some of its slaves from sub-Saharan Africa; Arab slave traders have drawn slaves for over 1,000 years from northern sub-Saharan Africa and East Africa, taking them to Southwest Asia; and slaves were taken from Africa by Christian slave traders to work in the Americas from soon after the time it was visited by Columbus (sometimes called the post-Columbian period) to the middle of the nineteenth century, when the trade was finally eradicated.

In your study you will focus on the third of these – the diaspora to the Americas by way of the transatlantic slave trade. This part of the diaspora has had a significant social and cultural impact on the modern Western world. But surely this is a historical question, so what can archaeology have to do with it? If you think back to the introductory track on the audio CD, you will remember that archaeology was discussed as being able to investigate anything and to be uniquely placed to study non-elite parts of societies through their material culture. Archaeology can do this in historical periods as well. Written documents relating to the African diaspora to the Americas are overwhelmingly written by the enslavers, not the slaves. Archaeology has the opportunity to apply its particular approaches to the academic study of the

subject. However, as you will soon see, it has been slow to take up the challenge. Although Greek and Roman slavery has long been studied, it is rarely given an explicitly African focus. There has been virtually no archaeological study of the East African slave trade (Alexander, 2001), and the archaeological study of the transatlantic diaspora has only recently developed out of the archaeological interest in the first Western settlers in North America and the remains of their colonial settlements.

Inequalities in societies have been a recurrent feature of virtually every society that you have studied in this course. However, *HP* does not explicitly discuss this, even though it is a prominent theme. From the first recognisable 'cultures', the Natufians, some people received different treatment after death. We may not know all that much about it, but it is a form of inequality. In the Inca empire, the Inca themselves were an exclusive elite and exploited other members of society to provide forced labour. This was a clear example of inequality between different sections of a society. Only very rarely has a society been identified as possibly 'egalitarian' (i.e. without an elite), for example the Indus civilisation (see *HP*, p.536). An extreme form of inequality, closely related to the African diaspora, is slavery. To be more precise, a specific form of slavery, 'chattel slavery', has been a feature of all the phases of the diaspora that have been discussed so far. There are various forms of slavery and chattel slavery, perhaps the most severe, has been defined as follows:

'A slave is a human being who is the property of, and entirely subject to, another human being under the religious, social and legal conventions of the society in which he or she lives.' Being 'the property of' means that an owner, restricted only by the conventions of his society, is able to buy, sell, free, adopt, ill-treat or kill his slave whose children belong to their owner and can be treated in the same way. A slave has no freedom or personal rights and can become one voluntarily, by a legal decision or by force.

(Alexander, 2001, p.45)

Slavery has been mentioned in various cultures and regions very briefly in *HP*: in Mesopotamia at Uruk in the fourth millennium BC (p.442), in Classical Greece and Rome (pp.495, 499 and 509–10), and in Africa (pp.351, 384, 389). It seems to have been a common, if not constant, feature of human societies. There is no in-depth discussion of the subject in the book; perhaps one reason for this is that slavery is difficult to detect in archaeology – after all, it is an intangible expression of power and identity (master or mistress and slave), rather than an expression of material culture. Typically, the study of slavery has been approached through the study of historical documents, but although it may be challenging, it is not impossible to study slavery using archaeological methods. Your next reading is not in *HP*, but is a short article from the *Annual Review of Anthropology* written in 1998. The article is clearly written and outlines the scope and potential of the archaeological study of the African diaspora.

Exercise

Now read the article 'The archaeology of the African diaspora' by Charles Orser (Orser, 1998). It is available online on the course website. The main purpose of this reading is to introduce you to a new area of archaeology and enable you to see how archaeology can be used to approach an apparently non-archaeological topic of contemporary importance. As you read, take brief notes to help you to follow the structure of the article, and note the major points that Orser makes. You will meet the concept of 'maroon' settlement – this refers to settlements established by escapee slaves.

Discussion

Orser makes some big claims for his specialist area, but he does have some good points to make. It is worth noting that when he refers to 'historical archaeology' he means historical archaeology of (and in) the USA. He is not taking into account European medieval archaeology nor industrial archaeology, for example. The first major point he makes is that the archaeology of the African diaspora is not simply the archaeology of slavery: slavery is only one part of a larger story of how people of African origin have spread around the globe. This is reinforced by the discussion of the positive potential of studying maroon settlements rather than the negative experience of slaves. Orser discusses the potential for employing archaeological approaches developed in the study of other cultures to address the material identification of African identity and the material aspects of maroon culture. However, there seem to be very few cases where it is possible clearly to identify a distinctive African material culture in the slave or maroon settlements. In fact, he rejects the simplistic equation of a people, ethnic or racial group with a distinctive type of material culture, when he discusses the fact that the relationship between people and the objects they use has a complex nature. In parallel with this, Orser also considers that simplistic polarisations of racial categories are not a valid basis for the investigation of past identities. Orser also squarely addresses the fact that archaeology can have a contemporary political and social relevance when it addresses topics such as race, and that it is not necessarily an isolated academic activity.

Orser's article was written in 1998 and the archaeology of slavery has moved on since then. Search the internet for 'archaeology slavery' for an update. In 2001, an edition of the journal *World Archaeology* was dedicated to the subject. It included an article by Alexander on the East African diaspora, and it is available online (there is a link on the course website if you would like to read it).

Looking back

By now you have studied a huge range of societies over a time span of 12,000 years from all areas of the globe except the Arctic (see *HP*, pp.709–11, if you would like to remedy this omission) and the Antarctic.

Exercise

Now read the concluding Chapter 19 of *HP*, 'The human past: retrospect and prospect' (pp.717–20). Looking back, what are the major features of this long story of the human past?

Discussion

This conclusion highlights four themes. The first, demographic increase, has been behind many of the topics you have studied: the development of agriculture, complex and bigger societies, cities, and empires were all partly stimulated by the growing number of people in human communities. The second theme is agricultural intensification and increasing social complexity; these are both directly influenced by population growth. The third theme, biological exchange, also follows on from the increased number of people who gradually populated and occupied the world. But one consequence of increased population density and increased contact between societies has been temporary falls in population levels caused by epidemic diseases. The final theme – climate change – can be seen to have been operating throughout the human past. Human societies have constantly had to adapt their behaviour to climatic changes. At a global level, for example, this included colonising the now temperate parts of the world after the last Ice Age and developing agricultural systems. At a local level, climatic changes have disrupted agricultural and social systems, particularly in fragile environments such as the fringes of desert areas in Southwest Asia, Mesoamerica and South America. The topic is now receiving much attention as environmental campaigners and news media spur politicians into action over global warming. But as you have learned, climatic changes have been a constant companion of human societies throughout the human past, and present-day global warming is an instance of the kind of change that human societies have previously experienced. Evidence indicates that the climate is now changing more rapidly than it has done in recent millennia, and human societies will adapt to it in the future, just as they have in the past. Your study of the archaeological evidence has shown that societies have adapted to changing circumstances in different ways in different places at different times. Contemporary societies will also react in different ways to the changes they face.

The conclusion to *HP* focuses on the fact that humans are biological organisms who live in a natural environment and sustain themselves by adapting to their changing circumstances. This focus, this approach to understanding the past, is the 'cultural ecology' or 'human ecology' that views humans very much as adaptive organisms surviving in a complex system of relationships with their environment (Block 1, Week 1; *HP*, pp.36–7). Taking an extreme view, cultural ecology would suggest that humans are at the mercy of changes in their environments and their behaviour is determined by their environments – this is 'environmental determinism'. This way of thinking lay behind 'processual archaeology', which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, and – to simplify – seeks for regularities in human responses to change that can be identified and described as though they are objective scientific phenomena (*HP*, p.39). An ecological relationship with the environment may cause societies to react, but does it

constrain societies to behave in a particular way to ensure their survival and growth? Could it be the case that some of the global regularities that you have studied – agriculture, cities, empires – can all be explained as the result of the limited range of possible adaptations that humans can make to their changing environment? This line of thinking could explain how it is that agriculture, cities, states and empires have all emerged in different parts of the world independently – human societies have come up with the same solutions to their challenges in isolation from one another.

Another approach is to look for discontinuities and differences. There is a huge variety within the human societies you have studied, sometimes there is even variety within small regions such as Mesoamerica or Southwest Asia. In Blocks 2 and 3 your work entailed looking for cities, states and empires in different communities in different parts of the world. In the case of cities, for example, the definition of what a city is had to become more and more flexible to incorporate the variety of settlements and societies that you studied. So, heading towards another extreme, is it the case that the categories that we have been studying, such as ‘cities’, are not universal phenomena after all, and that there is actually very little that unites Uruk, Rome, Jenné-jeno and Teotihuacán, beyond the fact that we have chosen to call them cities? In this way of thinking are we – as archaeologists – just imposing a preconceived framework of ideas onto the past in order to understand it by describing it using familiar categories such as ‘city’? Are we only able to understand the past by relating it to our own present? This kind of more subjective approach characterises ‘postprocessual archaeology’ and, to simplify again, suggests that we cannot achieve an objective account of what happened in the past, only an understanding that is shaped by the questions we choose to ask about the past (*HP*, p.40). The processual and postprocessual approaches may be considered opposite extremes, and as you have learned in your study of the Pacific, a better understanding of the past grows through academic debate rather than by maintaining an extreme position.

Two of the central themes of archaeology that we started with in Block 1 – human adaptations to the environment and demographic growth – are discussed in the final chapter of *HP*. It passes over our third theme, symbols and cognition. So, looking back, are there any generalisations about symbols and cognition that can be made?

Exercise

Think back over your studies; can you identify any generalisations that can be made concerning symbols and cognition? It is not an easy question. Are there any similarities between different regions or different periods? Are there recurring processes above and beyond subsistence and reproduction?

Discussion

One observation is that there is a great variety in symbolic behaviour. Different societies have used different symbols and material culture – often deliberately differentiating them to identify themselves as separate from their neighbours. Yet, as in the archaeology of the African diaspora, differences between societies are not necessarily detectable as differences in material culture.

Cognitive behaviour is also variable but there are perhaps generalisations that can be made. Most societies you have studied have, for example, developed particular ways of disposing of the dead, and most have some form of religion, or at least a structure of beliefs about the world. Most societies differentiate individuals into social ranks, often with an elite and with subject classes of people. Societies compete, perhaps going to war with one another, perhaps leading to domination and subjugation. All of these behaviours can be identified in different societies in different parts of the world.

Another general feature is that the material expressions of cognition and symbols become more complex as societies grow in size and complexity. The organisational demands and social structures of states and empires seem to entail sophisticated symbolic and cognitive behaviours. This appears to be true whether in the Mediterranean, Mesoamerica or China. But this association of complexity with sophistication needs more examination. It rather presupposes that present Western society is the culmination of human cultural development and sits at the peak of complexity and sophistication. However, your studies have shown you that hunter-gatherer societies, the Paiute and Aztecs for example, all had, or have, complex and sophisticated symbolic and cognitive behaviours that are different from contemporary Western human societies.

As archaeology developed as an academic discipline through the twentieth century it has very much tended to impose the dominant Western cultural and intellectual values on the objects and peoples it studies. The methods it uses – humanistic, scientific (processual) and post-modern (postprocessual) – are all characteristic of the Western academic tradition. Archaeology has traditionally interpreted prehistoric societies and societies in other parts of the world with reference to the Western tradition. Hence hunter-gatherers from both the epipalaeolithic and the southern hemisphere have been characterised as primitive in comparison to the contemporary Western society that both invented the discipline of archaeology, and largely, until recently, applied it to all areas of the globe. However, because archaeological knowledge has developed through debate, and more recently self-reflection, and has now extended its range across the globe, it is becoming more open to other non-Western interpretations of the past. Hunter-gatherers are now generally perceived as sophisticated, highly adapted societies, and their views of their own past, just like the Paiute, are beginning to be accepted as valuable in the discipline of archaeology.

Looking forwards

Contemporary humans live in changing environments, they are increasing in number, and the symbols they use and how they think about them play a significant role in defining cultural and social identities that are often in conflict with one another. The contemporary relevance of these three key themes in the study of archaeology, as set out in *HP* and Block 1, Week 1, provides a good reason to study archaeology, but this is not simply so that we can learn from the past and avoid past mistakes. Taking an archaeological approach to looking into the human past means taking a wide-ranging interdisciplinary approach that considers all levels of society and their

material and environmental conditions. This creates a broad understanding of the challenges that faced past societies and examines the full range of their responses – or the consequences of their responses – to change.

Contemporary approaches to world archaeology also value the past experience of all human cultures. The history of humankind is no longer conceived of as the history of the spreading of Western civilisation around the world following the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century AD European ‘exploration’ of the world, and the establishment of empires by Western nations between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries AD. The archaeological understanding of the human past is rapidly and continually developing, as you have learned in Block 4. This understanding will be gradually developed and improved through the process of archaeological debate and further research. Generally, as archaeological knowledge increases, simplistic explanations become less convincing and complex and multi-causal explanations of change emerge. *The Human Past* provides a current synthesis of ideas and interpretations of the story of human social and cultural development, but that synthesis is not static: it will need to be updated. In your study of the Pacific you have learned how ideas and interpretations can be challenged through both debate and the findings of new research. This will lead, in time, to a revised interpretation of the archaeology of the colonisation of the Pacific.

Yet archaeology is not only about understanding the past, it is also about understanding the present. Quite apart from being able to identify contemporary processes at work in the past, and understanding the processes of social and cultural development that have led us to where we are now, archaeological materials are a physical part of the present. Part of the archaeological record remains buried underground, part is displayed or stored in museums, and part exists as an element of the world we live in as rock art, medieval castles, pyramids or humanly modified landscapes, for example. These archaeological remains are not only passive ruins and relics for academic study, they also contribute to contemporary cultural or political identity and can stimulate emotional and passionate responses. Paiute rock art for example, if studied only from the viewpoint of academic archaeology that has developed in the Western intellectual tradition, may be interpreted in a variety of ways, as you have learned, but these do not necessarily come close to the way that contemporary Paiute people are connected to the rock art. The various explanations compete with one another. A subtle humanistic enquiry reveals that interchange between the Western intellectual tradition and native American tradition provides a deeper understanding of the role and purpose of rock art. However, at the same time, this new archaeological understanding does not necessarily get effectively communicated to the real world: rock art is often vandalised, either because it is not valued, or conversely it is valued to the extent that it is chipped away from the rock face and sold as artwork (see the course website for some examples). Such vandalism and theft is commonplace around the world and it raises the question of who the past belongs to. The rights of landowners, states, indigenous peoples and humanity generally can readily come into conflict over the ownership of and access to the material remains of the past. An example is Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, where for many years a government agency protected the famous megalithic monument from its ‘New Age’ visitors with a high wire fence.

Other issues are more contentious: for example, the repatriation of human remains held in museum collections as archaeological finds and the restoration of the land rights taken by states or corporations from indigenous peoples whose rightful claim can be traced through their archaeology.

Archaeology can also be used for nationalistic, political and ideological purposes. Modern states protect and promote their own archaeology (the archaeology within their national territory). Is part of the role of English Heritage, Historic Scotland and Cadw to promote English, Scottish or Welsh identity? Contemporary societies draw upon their archaeological past to affirm their cultural identity and differentiate themselves from their neighbours; for example, states vie to claim Alexander the Great as their own and the official coat of arms of Mexico depicts an Aztec legend (see the course website). Archaeology also contributes to contemporary society by providing a focus for cultural tourism, which, in turn, may stimulate local economic development. The issue has been investigated at the remote site of the Çatalhöyük excavation, for example, where the nearest town, Çumra, is considering renaming itself as Çatalhöyük (see the course website for details). Questions such as these lead us away from just understanding the past, towards thinking about what contribution archaeological knowledge and understanding can make in the contemporary world.

I hope you have enjoyed studying this course. All that remains is for you to complete your end-of-course assessment. This provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned about archaeology and also to demonstrate what you have learned about gathering, analysing and presenting information and arguments that you have researched. During your study you have read about half of *HP*. You can extend your knowledge and understanding by tackling the remainder when A251 is over. Some other courses in The Open University, in both the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science, also contain sections on archaeology. Others in the Arts Faculty enable you to take your learning from the wide-ranging enquiry of world archaeology to specific subjects within the scope of human cultural development: for example, classical studies, art history, history, history of science, technology and medicine, religious studies and heritage studies. I hope that A251 *World archaeology* has given you a broader and deeper understanding of the human past that will prove to be useful to you, whatever you go on to study.

Weeks 16–18 Study week

In these weeks you will work on your ECA. Full details are given in the Assessment Booklet.

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Two-headed figure, possibly eighteenth or early nineteenth century AD, wooden, 58 cm in height. From the Society Islands, French Polynesia. British Museum, London. AOA 1955.Oc10.1. © The Trustees of the British Museum



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